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**Cover picture:**

The performer impersonating Narasimha in *Narasimha Charitram* invariably gets into a frenzy while rendering his role, demanding assistance by others to curb him.

↓ The sacred mask of Narasimha in the household shrine of a Bhagavata in Saliyamangalam. It is only removed on the occasion of Narasimha Jayanti for the presentation of *Prahlada Charitram*, and is again installed in the shrine.



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## The Saliyamangalam Plays

Text and Photographs

by

Mohan Khokar

From the time it attained common recognition some 30 years ago, it has generally been held that the tradition of staging the sacred Bhagavata Mela plays, which are structured in the strict classical Bharata Natyam mould, is confined to only one place—the village of Melatur in the Tanjavur district. So much so, that, in some quarters, the tradition itself has come to be known as that of the Melatur Plays. That is because the foremost authorities and scholars in the field have continually harped on the Melatur theme, and others have found no reason to question this. Then, the leading master in the style, Balu Bhagavata, now over 90 years of age, belongs to Melatur, and that has certainly lent an added lustre and stature to the place. The correct picture, however, has emerged only during the last five years or so, which discloses that the Bhagavata Mela practice well survives in two other villages as well—Saliyamangalam and Teperumanallur. The present article pertains to the tradition as it obtains in Saliyamangalam.

It may be recalled that the Bhagavata Mela Nataka art came into being about 400 years ago, under the patronage of the Telugu Nayak rulers of Tanjavur. The tradition took root in six villages, all in the district of Tanjavur—Melatur, Soolamangalam, Saliyamangalam, Oothakadu, Nallur and Teperumanallur and at each of these places the plays, written especially for the art, were staged once every year, on the occasion of Narasimha Jayanti, which is observed in May or June. None of the villages has maintained an unbroken tradition of presenting the plays, there having been both sporadic spurts of activity as well as long years of neglect. In recent times, the villages of Melatur, Saliyamangalam and Teperumanallur are known to have regularly offered the *Nataka*-s, as part of ordained worship, for around 40 years.

It is generally believed that the Bhagavata Mela tradition was initiated by Achyutappa Nayak, 1572—1614 A.D., who gifted a village to certain Brahmin families for the avowed purpose of promoting art and learning in general and the dance-drama tradition of the Bhagavatas in particular and that this village, then named after its benefactor, Achyutapuram, later came to be called Melatur. However, the people of Saliyamangalam maintain that Melatur was originally known as Unnatapuram and that it is their village that constitutes the endowment made by Achyutappa and which originally enjoyed the appellation Achyutapuram. To substantiate the claim, they refer to the invocatory song, handed down to them through several generations and sung even today at the local temple at the commencement of any event of marked religious significance. The song includes the telling words: *Achyutapuramuna Saliyamangala agraharamuna sutinampunanu*.

Saliyamangalam lies 15 kms. to the east of Tanjavur, on the Nagore line. The local temple is dedicated to Lord Srinivasa and his consorts Sridevi and Bhoodevi, and this is the focal point of the celebrations. It is said that the inhabitants fled the place when it was attacked by Hyder Ali and his minions.

but, before leaving the village, they dislodged the idols from the temple and secreted them in a well, concealed inside the temple tank. Not very long ago, the idols were discovered, by accident, whereupon they were retrieved and reinstated in the temple.

It is commonly held that the plays enacted in Bhagavata Mela, in all the six village, are by Venkatarama Sastri of Melatur. But this theory has now been discarded. In Saliyamangalam, for example, the plays are by Bharatam Panchanatha Bhagavata, who lived long before Venkatarama Sastri, and there are other authors to whom the plays are ascribed in the other villages. Five dance-dramas are attributed to Panchanatha Bhagavata: *Prahlada Charitram*, *Rukmini Kalyanam*, *Sita Kalyanam*, *Rukmangda* and *Vipranarayana*. These are in Telugu—as indeed all Bhagavata Mela plays are—and they were composed at the time of Vijayaraghava of Tanjavur's Nayak dynasty. It is claimed that for a long time all the five plays were performed annually. However, while the other five villages followed the custom of staging the Bhagavata Mela plays only at the time of Narasimha Jayanti, at Saliyamangalam there were two occasions in the year for the presentation, Narasimha Jayanti and Rama Navami. Three of the plays were common to the two festivals while *Rukmini Kalyanam* used to be performed on Narasimha Jayanti and *Sita Kalyanam* on Rama Navami. From the time the three idols were taken away from the village, the staging of the plays on Rama Navami was discontinued. For many years now, for want of a sufficient number of participants as well as of funds, only two plays, *Prahlada Charitram* and *Rukmini Kalyanam*, are presented at the time of Narasimha Jayanti.

The festival being in honour of Narasimha, it is understandable that the leading play in the tradition, in all the villages, is *Prahlada Charitram*, and it is with this that the festival opens. In the climactic sequence of the play, a performer wearing a mask of Narasimha makes his appearance, and after confronting the atheist father of Prahlada, Hiranyakashipu, delivers an impassioned harangue during the course of which he works himself up to a pitch of uncontrollable frenzy, and invariably collapses. He is then accorded a lot of importance, with song and *arati*, or an offering of sacred light and incense, after which the play comes to a close. The mask of Narasimha in each village is a special one, and regular worship is offered to it by devotees. It is kept in the temple, where it is displayed prominently, except in the case of Saliyamangalam where it is part of the household shrine of a Bhagavata and is offered adoration along with the idols of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana.

Before the presentation of *Prahlada Charitram* on the opening night at Saliyamangalam, images of the presiding deity Lord Shrilivasa along with those of Sridevi and Bhoodevi are carried in procession around the village and then deposited on an altar which faces the stage specially erected for the event. Songs in praise of the deity called *tattuchutru* are sung by the Bhagavatas. *Arati* is offered to the deity by the performer privileged to take the role of Narasimha in the play.

The presentation begins with the Bhagavatas singing the *todayamangalam*, an invocation, as they proceed from the stage to where the deities rest, weaving a passage through the seated audience, and then return to the stage. This is



Every play opens with the appearance of a boy wearing the mask of Ganapati. An elder member of the group assists him in going through his paces.





Pahlada with his mother Lilavati in *Pahlada Chantam*.

followed by the dance of a small boy wearing the mask of Ganapati. As the play unfolds, each principal character is introduced after the singing of a *dwipada* or couplet, through which the appearance, attributes, temperament and so forth of the character are spelt out. Also, each character makes his or her appearance dancing to a *daru*, or song descriptive of the character. Most of the female characters adopt the *devadasi* mode in their costumes. The male characters wear pyjamas and knee-length coats or *dhoti*-s and some of them sport turbans.

In between sequences, the Bhagavatars sing songs to provide links to the story. A *sabdam*, which gives the kernel of the story, is offered before the commencement of the play proper and, while the Bhagavatars sing the lines, the *sutradhara*, or conductor renders *abhinaya* for them. Likewise, there are specially composed songs to preface key situations in the unfolding of a story, such as the *sthambha stotra* sung by Pahlada, just prior to the splitting of the *sthambha*, or pillar, and the emergence of Narasimha in *Pahlada Charitram*. These *sabdam*-s, *stotram*-s and the like, it is to be noted, are compositions outside the text of the play and are superb pieces, both poetically and musically, and constitute a feature exclusive to Saliyamangalam. Formerly, the main characters of the drama were portrayed by persons belonging to only certain families who had what may be called a hereditary right to the roles. The practice has now ceased, except in the case of Narasimha which role continues to be played only by individuals from a particular family.

On the day prior to Narasimha Jayanti, the *shakti* or 'energy' believed to be inherent in the mask of Narasimha is transferred temporarily, through certain ceremonies and rites, to holy water kept in a pot. The mask is then dislodged, washed and repainted. All this is done in secrecy, for great sanctity is attached to the proceedings. In the evening, elaborate rituals known as *pranapratishtha*, *sahasranamarchana* and *deeparadhana* are performed by a large gathering. The power of Narasimha is again transferred to the mask. No such practice is followed in any of the other villages.

The play begins at about 10 at night and Narasimha makes his appearance around 4.30 the following morning. It is ensured that the manifestation of Narasimha coincides, as advised in religious lore, with the time when it is neither night nor day. The makeshift stage erected for the play is quickly dismantled and two wooden cut-outs representing a pillar are planted in position. The man playing Narasimha, who is generally already in a state of semi-trance, is brought behind the pillar. At the appointed time and, to the accompaniment of clamorous music and chanting and fireworks, the pillar splits open and Narasimha emerges in all his glory and fury. Nothing of this kind is found in any of the other villages.

Another unusual feature in Saliyamangalam is that in *Rukmini Kalyanam*, when the presentation is over in the morning, two young boys, who are in no way connected with the play, are dressed up as Krishna and Rukmini and their marriage is performed. They are then taken in a procession round the village to the accompaniment of music and song. They are received at each house by the male members of the family who wash their feet as also those of the escorting Bhagavatars and then sprinkle the resultant water, considered holy, on themselves as well as on their family members. Women of the house offer candy, betel leaf, plantains and camphor to the two and also perform *arati*.

If the tradition of Bhagavata Mela today survives at Saliyamangalam, the credit for this is due, in no small measure, to D. Sethuramayyar who died about 25 years ago. He came of the line of Pañchanatha Bhagavata, the author of the Saliyamangalam plays. A keen musician and scholar, Sethuramayyar composed about 100 *kirtanam*-s which carry his *mudra* 'Achyutapuram' and also wrote an abridged version of the *Ramayana* in Telugu. After him, the responsibility of continuing the Bhagavata Mela tradition is being shouldered by his sons S. Raghavan and S. Srinivasan, who play the part of Hiranyakashipu and his wife Lilavati respectively in *Prahlada Charitram*. S. Raghavan retired as a Station Superintendent in Southern Railway while S. Srinivasan is presently an Income Tax Officer in Cuddalore, near Madras. Which is just as well, for not even a single actor-dancer in Bhagavata Mela, in all the privileged villages, is or has been a professional artiste, a fact which endorses the claim that the art is performed not by way of entertainment but as a moral obligation hallowed by usage.

## The Concept of *Tala* in Semi-Classical Music

Peter Manuel

Writers on Indian music have generally had less difficulty defining *tala* than *raga*, which remains a somewhat abstract, intangible entity. Nevertheless, an examination of the concept of *tala* in Hindustani semi-classical music reveals that, in many cases, *tala* itself may be a more elusive and abstract construct than is commonly acknowledged, and, in particular, that just as a *raga* cannot be adequately characterized by a mere schematic of its ascending and descending scales, similarly, the number of *matra*-s in a *tala* may be a secondary or even irrelevant feature in the identification of a *tala*.

The treatment of *tala* in *thumri* parallels that of *raga* in *thumri*, sharing *thumri*'s characteristic folk affinities, regional variety, stress on sentimental expression rather than theoretical complexity, and a distinctively loose and free approach to theoretical structures. The liberal use of alternate notes and the casual approach to *raga* distinctions in *thumri* find parallels in the loose and inconsistent nomenclature of light-classical *tala*-s and the tendency to identify them not by their theoretical *matra*-count, but instead by less formal criteria like stress patterns.

Just as most *thumri raga*-s have close affinities with and, in many cases, origins in the diatonic folk modes of North India, so also the *tala*-s of *thumri* (viz., Deepchandi—in its fourteen- and sixteen-beat varieties—Kaharva, Dadra, and Sitarkhani) appear to have derived from folk meters. Again, like the flexible, free *thumri raga*-s, the folk meters adopted in semi-classical music acquired some, but not all, of the theoretical and structural characteristics of their classical counterparts.

We may assume that, both in the past and the present, many folk musicians have felt no need to apply particular names to the simple meters or *tala*-s they employed. Many such meters, in the process of being incorporated in stylized forms into classical or semi-classical music, acquired names which appear to derive from the folk *genres* with which they were associated; the *tala* names Dhamar, Jhumra, Dadra, Qawwali, and Chanchar are probable examples.

Aside from possessing standardized names, classical *tala*-s also have certain fundamental theoretical attributes, including the specific number of *matra*-s, and internal structural divisions with stressed and unstressed *tali* and *khali* sections. The clearest representation or embodiment of these features is the *tala*'s *theka*, a fixed series of mnemonic syllables denoting drum strokes, contained within one cycle of the *tala*. *Tala* itself remains a more broad and abstract concept than *theka*, whose role has been likened to that of scale in a *raga*.<sup>1</sup> Thus, during accompaniment, the *theka* may often be present only in a highly ornamented form, or, during a *tabla* solo, it may be absent for extended periods, but the concept of the *tala* remains intact in the minds of the performer and the attentive listener; moreover, the structural features of the *tala* (e.g., *tali* and *khali* sections) are often preserved in solos (especially *kaida*-s). Variant *theka*-s may also be used within a given *tala*.

In classical music, these variant *theke*-s do not differ remarkably from each other (e.g., Teentala "dha dhin dhin dha dha..." vs. "na dhin dhin na na..."), and the application of *tala* names, codified by innumerable descriptive and pedagogical works, is orderly and consistent. Such is not the case in the *tala*-s of light-classical music (in particular, *thumri*). In modern practice, the names Jat, Deepchandi, Chanchar and Addha are all used by different musicians in different regions to denote either or both of the related fourteen- or sixteen-*matra tala*-s whose *theke*-s are given below, while Addha may also denote distinct eight- or sixteen-*matra tala*-s.<sup>2</sup>

Fourteen *matra*-s:  $\overset{x}{dha} \text{ dhin} - \overset{1}{/} dha \text{ dha dhin} - /$   
 $\overset{o}{ta} \text{ tin} - \overset{3}{/} dha \text{ dha dhin} -$

Sixteen *matra*-s:  $\overset{x}{dha} - dhin - \overset{1}{/} dha \text{ dha dhin} - /$   
 $\overset{o}{ta} - tin - \overset{3}{/} dha \text{ dha dhin} -$

The latter *tala* differs only in the insertion of the silent *matra*-s two and ten; otherwise, the strokes are identical.

The clearest manifestation of the affinities of semi-classical *tala*-s with folk meters is the popularity of simple meters of eight and sixteen *matra*-s in *thumri*. Prior research<sup>3</sup> has suggested an evolutionary relationship between modern *thumri* and the medieval folk-derived dance and song form *charchari* (*chachchhari*, *chanchari*), noting some correspondence between certain of the *tala*-s used in each. The word *chanchar*, denoting the *tala*-s most characteristic of modern *thumri*, clearly derives from *charchari*. The medieval *charchari* song was sung in the *tala* of the same name, of which variants in eight or sixteen *matra*-s were common; these *tala*-s resembled the popular Rasa *tala* of contemporary folk music.<sup>4</sup> We may presume a natural similarity, and hereditary affinity, between these meters and the eight-*matra* Kaharva *tala* which predominates in the folk music of North India today. Kaharva *tala* was seldom, if ever, used in the nineteenth century *bandish* (or *bol bant*) *thumri*, where the classical Teentala prevailed, in accordance with that genre's close relationship with *khyal*. *Bandish thumri* anthologies, however, do reveal that a number of such compositions were set to Punjabi Teentala,<sup>5</sup> which has certain structural affinities with Kaharva. Use of eight- and sixteen-*matra tala*-s is quite common in the modern *bol banao thumri*; these *tala*-s include Kaharva, and the sixteen-*matra tala*-s Sitarkhani, Punjabi *theke* (Punjabi Teentala), Jat and Addha.

Kaharva *tala* appears in a number of variants, all of eight *matra*-s; most of these iambically stress the *sam* (first *matra* of the *tala*) by preceding it with an accented upbeat on the penultimate *matra* (seven), as in the following, most common *theke*:

$\overset{x}{dha} \text{ ge na ti} / \overset{o}{na} \text{ ka } \overset{1}{dhi} \text{ na} / (\overset{o}{dha} \dots)$

This iambic, "heartbeat" rhythm pervades North Indian folk music; drummers often intensify the iambic effect by depressing the left hand drum head on the *sam* in order to increase skin tension and raise the pitch of that beat.

Punjabi Teentala, Sitarkhani, and, in some traditions, Addha are sixteen-*matra tala*-s which reflect certain affinities with Kaharva and, in some cases, with Deepchandi. Written sources are not consistent, however, in describing or distinguishing these *tala*-s. Some sources<sup>6</sup> equate Sitarkhani with Addha, giving its *theke* as below:

$\overset{x}{dha} \text{ dhin} - dha / \overset{1}{dha} \text{ dhin} - dha / \overset{o}{dha} \text{ tin} - ta / \overset{3}{ta} \text{ dhin} - dha$

The author, however, has never heard this *theke* used in *thumri*. Far more common in *bol banao thumri* is the *tala* given below:

$\overset{x}{dha} - dhin - dha / \overset{1}{dha} - dhin - ta / \overset{o}{ta} - tin - dha / \overset{3}{dha} - dhin - dha$

This *theke* is called Punjabi by Sharma,<sup>7</sup> but it has been my experience that musicians simply refer to it as Sitarkhani.

Let us examine the Addha variants more closely. *Tabliya* Taranath Rao of the Ajrara *gharana* enumerates three traditions. In the first, Addha is the sixteen-*matra tala* having the *theke*, also called Sitarkhani by Sharma, described above. From one perspective, this *theke* resembles that of Teentala, with the third stroke in each *vibhag* (internal structural subdivision) omitted. From another perspective, it resembles the common Sitarkhani, differing only in the placement of the second stroke in each *vibhag*.

Teentala:  $\overset{x}{dha} \text{ dhin dhin dha} / \overset{1}{dha} \text{ dhin dhin dha} /$   
 $\overset{o}{dha} \text{ tin tin ta} / \overset{3}{ta} \text{ dhin dhin dha}$

Addha #1:  $\overset{x}{dha} \text{ dhin} - dha / \overset{1}{dha} \text{ dhin} - dha /$   
 $\overset{o}{dha} \text{ tin} - ta / \overset{3}{ta} \text{ dhin} - dha$

Sitarkhani:  $\overset{x}{dha} - dhin - dha / \overset{1}{dha} - dhin - dha /$   
 $\overset{o}{dha} - tin - dha / \overset{3}{dha} - dhin - dha$

Of greater interest is the similarity—particularly noticeable at slow tempo—between the commencement of Addha #1 and fourteen-*matra* Deepchandi:

Addha #1:  $\overset{x}{dha} \text{ dhin} - dha / \overset{1}{dha} \text{ dhin} \dots$

Deepchandi:  $\overset{x}{dha} \text{ dhin} - / \overset{1}{dha} \text{ dha dhin} \dots$



In view of this similarity, it is not surprising that a second tradition (also cited by Rao) equates Addha with Deepchandi, and/or sixteen-*matra* Deepchandi. The third tradition of Addha, in fact, is essentially identical to this latter *tala*, but is counted in eight rather than sixteen-*matra*-s. Taranath Rao calls the *tala* with the following *theke* "Addha-dhumali":

<sup>x</sup>dha dhin dhadha tin / <sup>o</sup>ta tin dhadha dhin

Sharma<sup>8</sup> calls this *theke* Qawwali, and it is presumably the same as the "Addha-kaoli" cited by Banerjee in 1886 as the most characteristic *tala* of *thumri*.<sup>9</sup> This *theke*-very common in *thumri*-is identical to that of sixteen-*matra* Deepchandi, and is often called Jat today:

<sup>x</sup>dha - dhin - / <sup>1</sup>dha dha tin - / <sup>o</sup>ta - tin - / <sup>3</sup>dha dha dhin -

These structural affinities enable us to hypothesize a certain relationship between the eight-*matra* Addha *tala* formerly popular in *thumri*, and the modern versions of Deepchandi in both fourteen and sixteen-*matra*-s. More importantly, the name Addha given to these three interrelated *tala*-s (of eight, fourteen, and sixteen-*matra*-s) highlights their structural similarities, and suggests that these similarities (in commencement, order of strokes, etc.) are more important as distinguishing criteria than the number of *matra*-s in a given *tala*.

The development and current treatment of Chanchar *tala*-s (Deepchandi, Jat, Addha, etc.) tend to corroborate this hypothesis. The evolution of these *tala*-s, unfortunately, is not clearly documented; evidence suggests that Chanchar (in both fourteen- and sixteen-*matra* varieties) may have been popular in folk music before the nineteenth century (as it is now), but that it was not incorporated into semi-classical music until the rise of the *bol banao thumri* in the late nineteenth century. Thus, early references to the *tala*, under its various names, are few and inconsistent. Versions of Charchari *tala*-s described in the thirteenth century *Sangitaratnakara* appear to have had eight, eleven or sixteen *matra*-s. Sixteen-*matra* Chanchar, described above, is still popular, but no *tala* of eleven *matra*-s is used in *thumri*. Moreover, we should hesitate to infer a direct relation between thirteenth century Charchari and twentieth century Jat, because of the exiguity of references to these *tala*-s in the six centuries between.

Nineteenth century treatises like *Nadavinoda* and the voluminous *Sangita Raga Kalpadruma* do not refer to Deepchandi, Chanchar, or Jat *tala*-s, although they mention many other *tala*-s. The *Kalpadruma* cites Hori as the *tala* of one song; the traditional association of Deepchandi with Hori suggests, albeit inconclusively, that that *tala* may have been in use in nineteenth century folk and/or semi-classical music. The word Deepchandi, as denoting a *tala*, does not appear until early twentieth century sources (e.g., record labels like Sarasvati Bai's "Hori Deepchandi" MD-1555), although *Kalpadruma* contains a song entitled "Deepchand" (moonlight). The fourteen-*matra* *tala* corresponding to modern Deepchandi, however, is described by Banerjee in 1886<sup>10</sup> as Jat or Yat *tala*; similarly, Platts,<sup>11</sup> writing in 1884, defines Jat as "a kind of musical rhythm

(generally sung at the *Holi* festival)". We can infer, then, that both fourteen- and sixteen-*matra* Deepchandi, by the names "Jat" and, perhaps, "Qawwali", were somewhat familiar in the nineteenth century. Jat, Chanchar and Deepchandi are today common in the folk music of Uttar Pradesh, especially in songs associated with the vernal *Holi* festival. Hence, their induction into semi-classical music parallels, rather than precedes, the rise of the *bol banao thumri* in the late nineteenth century. Regional variety may account for much of the confusion and inconsistency regarding the use of the names Jat, Chanchar, and Deepchandi.

Matters are further complicated by the existence of a ten-*matra* *tala* called "Jat" *tala*, or "Charchari", described in the *Radhagovind Sangitsar* of 1804, and a version of Deepchandi in ten *matra*-s cited in the *Sangita Sudarshana* of 1935, written by a disciple of the nineteenth century sitarist Amritsen.<sup>12</sup> The structure of the *Radhagovind Sangitsar's* Jat—2+3+2+3—as well as the phonetic similarity of Jat and Jhap invite obvious comparison with the common Jhaptala, whose *theke* is:

<sup>x</sup>dhin na / <sup>2</sup>dhin dhin na / <sup>o</sup>tin na / <sup>3</sup>dhin dhin na

Jhaptala also resembles modern fourteen- and sixteen-*matra* Deepchandi in that all have the same number of drum strokes, viz., ten. Whatever the origin of Jat-*tala* of ten beats and its relation to Jhaptala, the tradition has long since expired, presumably because the popularity of Jhaptala renders Jat-*tala* superfluous. Moreover, modern *thumri* is not sung in any *tala* of ten *matra*-s, nor can we assume that the *Sangitsar* specimen in Jat-*tala*—a song in *raga* Sarang, which is regarded now as a *khyal raga*—was a *thumri*.

We have suggested that disparate regional tendencies may account for some of the current inconsistency in using the names Chanchar, Deepchandi and Jat to denote either or both fourteen- or sixteen-*matra* *tala*-s. This inconsistency may also reflect the structural similarity of these *tala*-s, and the idea that the identity of number and order of strokes in the *theke* is more important as a generic feature than the number of *matra*-s. This identity and the appropriateness of the loose nominal distinction between the two *tala*-s, are particularly evident in a style of playing popular during the turn of the century, in which the *tala* is so drastically syncopated that one cannot ascertain whether it is in fourteen or sixteen *matra*-s. The style is called *langra* (meaning "lame, limping"), in accordance with its uneven pulse. In *langra*, the *bol* of the Deepchandi *theke* is maintained (dha dhin dha dha dhin etc.), but the pulse is deliberately rendered irregular, albeit somewhat predictably. If one chooses to regard a typical *langra* Deepchandi *theke* as being in sixteen *matra*-s, then *matra*-s one, seven, and thirteen are grossly elongated at the expense of the others; conversely, if one regards it as a syncopated fourteen-*matra* *tala*, then the first *matra* is again too long, along with *matra*-s six and eight, while most of the remaining *matra*-s are too short.

These syncopations are best illustrated by using the NUTs ("nominal units of time") system of measurement, which corresponds to the cents system of pitch measurement, except that the latter is logarithmic, while NUTs are linear.<sup>13</sup>



The excerpt below shows one cycle of the *tala* from an early recording (ca. 1925?) of Rasoolan Bai singing a *thumri* in Bhairavi (GE 3280). First, the cycle is measured and analyzed as if the *tala* were of fourteen *matra*-s. Setting the length of one cycle at 1400 NUTs, each *matra* would then ideally have a value of 100 NUTs (regardless of the tempo). The symbol +58, for example, denotes a *matra* of 158 NUTs, which is considerably longer than the ideal. Divergences of one or two NUTs are inconsiderable and imperceptible, but intervals of ten or more, at this tempo, become significant. Thus the gross elongation of *matra*-s one, six, seven, and eight, and the attenuation of the other *matra*-s (as evident below) are clearly audible in performance.

**Matra:** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14  
**Theka:** dha dhin - dha dha dhin - ta tin - dha dha dhin -  
**Length:** +87 +58 -30 -23 +36 +67 -27 -5 -34 -29

Alternately, the same excerpt could be analyzed as if it were in sixteen *matra*-s; here, the total number of NUTs in one cycle is set at 1600, such that the ideal length of one *matra* would again be 100 (x16=1600). Note the pronounced irregularities; here the elongated beats are seven and, again, one.

**Matra:** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16  
**Theka:** dha - dhin - dha dha dhin - ta - tin - dha dha dhin -  
**Length:** +14 -19 -20 -12 +69 -10 -2 +9 -24 -5

Whether analyzed as a sixteen- or fourteen-*matra tala*, the *theka* is extremely irregular and incompatible with any metrical framework. Given such a tradition, it is not surprising that musicians do not regard the difference between fourteen- and sixteen-*matra* varieties of Deepchandi significant enough to merit separate names. Thus, the prevalence of *langra* must have contributed to the practice of using all four names (Chanchar, Jat, Deepchandi, and Addha) to denote a *tala* which is identified primarily by its strokes, rather than by the number of *matra*-s it has.

*Langra* can be heard on a number of early twentieth century recordings, by artists like Rasoolan Bai and Malka Jan (e.g., HMV GC-3-13488). Its appeal may have derived from the rather free-rhythmic character it lends to the *tala* and the performance in general, thereby complementing the rhapsodic nature of the *vistar* which also is largely free-rhythmic. The tradition has been eclipsed, however, and is only rarely heard today.<sup>14</sup>

While pronounced temporal modifications in *tala*-s may not be widespread in modern *thumri*, a certain number of variant *theka*-s may occasionally be encountered. Some of these variants have regional derivations, particularly in the

case of the Punjab. The Kaharva variant preferred by Patiala singers, for example, is particularly distinctive; the stroke on the fifth *matra* includes a downward snap of the left-hand index finger:

<sup>x</sup>dha - na na / <sup>o</sup>tin - dha (ti) / <sup>x</sup>(dha...)

A Punjabi version of Dadra *tala* (six *matra*-s) incorporates the syncopated second beat characteristic of the seven-*matra* Muglai *tala* of the Punjab and Rajasthan:

Standard Dadra *tala*: <sup>x</sup>dha dhin na / <sup>x</sup>ta tin na  
Muglai *tala*: <sup>o</sup>tin -kat -te / <sup>i</sup>dhin dhin dhage tirakita  
Punjabi Dadra *tala*: <sup>x</sup>dha -dhin -na / <sup>o</sup>dha tin na

Patiala singers occasionally prefer a variant of Deepchandi *theka* given below (as in Barkat Ali Khan's EMI GTCS 02B 5008):

<sup>x</sup>dha tira kita / <sup>2</sup>dha dha dhin - / <sup>o</sup>ta tira kita / <sup>3</sup>dha dha dhin -

In other common variants, the silent *matra*-s—three, seven, ten, and fourteen—are filled in with (predominantly dampened) strokes:

<sup>x</sup>dha -ge dhin kat tete / <sup>2</sup>dha gege dha dhage tin kat tirakita  
<sup>o</sup>ta -kat tin kat tete / <sup>3</sup>dha -ge dha gege dhin dha gege

In this paper, we have not attempted to standardize or even catalogue in detail the inconsistent application of the terms Jat, Deepchandi, Chanchar, and Addha to certain fourteen- or sixteen-*matra tala*-s. Rather, our intent has been to demonstrate that the very flexibility and inconsistency of these appellations illustrate a distinctive and previously overlooked aspect of this group of semi-classical *tala*-s, namely, that they are identified primarily by their stress patterns and the number and order of structural strokes, rather than by their number of *matra*-s. The latter feature is thus an important structural criterion only in *tala*-s used in classical music. In *thumri*, by contrast, the element of metrical freedom corresponds to that of melodic freedom. Just as a singer may choose to inject phrases from Pilu, Khamaj, and Ghara into a rendition of *raga* Kafi, similarly, a *tabliya*, when told by the vocalist to "play Deepchandi," may play a *tala* of fourteen *matra*-s, sixteen *matra*-s, or a syncopated *langra* which is neither. Moreover, a given *thumri* composition can be sung in entirely different *tala*-s; the Bhairavi *thumri*, *Ras ke bhare tore nain*, for example, is recorded in Kaharva *tala* by Siddeshvari Devi (on EMI 6TCS02B 5040), in Dadra by Gauhar Jan (on an early Gramophone Co. record), and in Deepchandi by Begum Akhtar (Sangeet Natak Akademi Archives). A variety of regional variant *theka*-s may also be

employed. While a vocalist might explicitly prefer or request a particular variant, the *bol* of Deepchandi, whether in a fourteen- or sixteen-*matra* context, would suffice to make the *tala* recognizable as Deepchandi (or Chanchar, Jat, etc.), just as a singer's liberal and free rendition of *raga* Kafi could still be recognized as being Kafi by the presence of certain key structural elements (characteristic phrases). This liberty again illustrates the fact that *tala* as well as *raga* may be a broad, abstract, and somewhat intangible entity which cannot be defined in terms of simple theoretical formulae.

#### References:

1. M. R. Gautam, *The Musical Heritage of India* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1980), p. 18.
2. According to one tradition, Chanchar differs from Deepchandi and Jat only in being customarily rendered in fast tempo. In all versions, *matra*-s six and seven in fourteen- and sixteen-*matra* Deepchandi may be rendered either with *dhin* (as shown here) or the dampened stroke *tin*.
3. Shatrughna Shukla, "Thumri ki Utpatti, Vikas, aur Shailiyan" (Delhi University: Ph.D. dissertation, 1973), pp. 127 ff.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
5. See, e.g., specimens in Gangadhar Rao Telang's *Thumari Sangrah* (Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Sangit Natak Academy, 1977).
6. Bhagwat Sharan Sharma, *Taal Prakaash* (Hathras: Sangeet Karyalaya 1978), p. 107.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
9. K. D. Banerjee, *Gita Sutra Sar*, Vol. II. Translated and annotated by H. S. Banerji (Calcutta: N. N. Banerji, 1941), p. 66.
10. *Op. cit.*, p. 62.
11. John T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English* (Oxford: Oxford Univ., 1968), p. 376.
12. In Shukla, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-9.
13. The system of NUTs was conceived in a series of seminars led by Dr. N. A. Jairazbhoy at the University of California, Los Angeles. NUTs measurements can be performed in two ways: first, the filtered sound signal may be "frozen" and measured, bit by bit, on a storage oscilloscope; alternately, a greatly decelerated (and filtered) version may be recorded on reel-to-reel tape, and after manually locating the exact position of each rhythmic event in question, a corresponding place on the tape itself may be marked with a grease pencil. The length of the average, "ideal" beat or measure is then computed, multiplied accordingly (by "x") to equal 100; all other measurements are similarly multiplied by "x" and the divergences are noted. See Jairazbhoy's "Nominal Units of Time: A Counterpart for Ellis' System of Cents," in *Essays in Honour of Peter Crossley-Holland on his 65th Birthday* (Los Angeles: UCLA, 1983).
14. *Langra* is also discussed in Rebecca Stewart's "The Tabla in Perspective" (UCLA: Ph.D. dissertation, 1974).

## Dance Sculptures of the Medieval Temples of North Gujarat

(With Special Reference to the *Natyashastra* Tradition and *Sangitopanishatsaroddhara*)

Sunil Kothari

The dance sculptures described here belong to the medieval period in the history of Gujarat, dating from the middle of the eighth century to the end of the thirteenth century. In the country, as a whole, it began with the decline of the Gupta dynasty and the dismemberment of Harsha's empire in the seventh century and ended with the Muslim conquests.<sup>1</sup> This period extended roughly from the ninth to the fourteenth century.

The medieval age was characterised by the splendour of its buildings and monuments resulting in a legacy of immense architectural and sculptural wealth. A multitude of gods and goddesses and exquisite figures containing some of the masterpieces of Indian sculpture adorn the walls of the temples. From times immemorial, the temple has been the focal point of religious, cultural and social life. The spirit of *Bhakti* and a desire to earn spiritual merit prompted devotees, merchants and kings to lavish money on constructing these edifices. Since the temple was the abode of the god, where he lived almost in a human fashion<sup>2</sup>, it was the duty of the priest to provide the image with all manner of comforts. The deity had to be entertained with music and dance. Thus, dance formed an integral part of *seva*. Innumerable inscriptional and other evidences reveal that special *natamandapa*-s formed part of the temple where dancing as a ritual was performed by *devadasi*-s.

The medieval temples of North Gujarat, in particular Modhera, Delwada, Taranga and Kumbharia, besides the Rudramahalaya and the sculptural remnants of the Rani ni vav and other edifices of Patan and the neighbouring area, point to the strong *Natyashastra* tradition which prevailed during the medieval period. The history of the dance movement, as reflected in the dance sculptures of these monuments, and a study of the *Sangita* texts of Gujarat, suggest that the dance tradition continued not merely in line with the *Natyashastra parampara*, but also incorporated the gradual development and variations observed by *shilpin*-s and creative writers.

From the thirteenth century onwards, manuals on dance and music are to be found from practically every region of the country. In this context, Vachanacharya Sudhakalasha's text *Sangitopanishatsaroddhara* (*SUS*)<sup>3</sup> deserves special mention. As its very name suggests, it is an abridged version of a bigger and probably more comprehensive work called *Sangitopanishat* written by the same author in 1350 A.D. This work also deals with the art of dancing and appeared on the scene a century after the monumental work *Sangitaratnakara* (*SR*)<sup>4</sup> by Sharangadeva. It is, therefore, obvious that we obtain, in the *SUS*, a tradition from Western India, almost contemporary with that of the *SR*, which has preserved the *Sangita* and the *Nritta* traditions of the Deccan and Karnataka during the thirteenth century.

Similarly, from Rajasthan, there is the *Nrityaratnakosha* (NRK)<sup>5</sup>, another important text by Kumbharana (1443-1468 A.D.) which also records the dance traditions prevalent during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries as a continuum of the *Natyashastra* tradition in Western India. It sheds sufficient light on the *nartana parampara*, wherein several points of similarity are discerned. The NRK manuscripts are found in the four *Ullasa*-s which follow the *Natyashastra* and the *Sangitaratnakara parampara*.

*Mansollasa* (MU)<sup>6</sup>, the famous encyclopaedic work by Someshwara, the Western Chalukya King of Kalyani, also deals with dance and music. Known also as *Abhilashitarthachintamani*, *Manasollasa*, besides dealing with a large variety of subjects like the science of polity, the lore relating to taming horses and elephants, the science of jewellery, architecture, iconography and paintings, also mentions the luxurious pursuits and pastimes of the aristocracy in ancient India, which included the art of dance and music. The eighteenth *vinoda* summarises the art of dancing which followed the *parampara* of the *Natyashastra* and though it reveals some confusion in terminology, it essentially points to the uniformity seen in the history of dance movement during the medieval period.

The *shilpa* texts like *Samarangana-Sutradhara* (SS)<sup>7</sup>, *Aparajitaprachhha* (AP)<sup>8</sup> and *Kshirarnava* (KSV)<sup>9</sup> and the *Natyashastra* texts (referred to above), when studied with a view to the inter-relationships between the plastic and the performing arts, shed valuable light on the art of dancing prevalent during the medieval period. SS, ascribed to the Paramara king, Bhojadeva of Malwa (1018-1060 A.D.), and AP, written two centuries later, lay down the canons and principles employed in the building of temples during this period. *Vastushilpa* is also referred to in the *Matsya*, the *Agni* and the *Vishnudharmottara* (VDP)<sup>10</sup> *Purana*-s as well as in Varahamihira's *Brihatsamhita*. AP specifically mentions the *Nagara* style of architecture, followed in Madhyadesha, which is found in the temples under review.

Any historical reconstruction of the dance style prevalent in the medieval period necessarily calls for correlation between the texts and manuals and the material available in the historical chronicles and the regional literature. All these sources point to the strong continuum of the *Natyashastra* tradition seen in the dance sculptures of Gujarat. Scholars like Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan<sup>11</sup> and others have succinctly demonstrated the inter-relationship between the arts of dance and sculpture and traced the history of dance movement in India as a whole. The methodology employed in analysing the dance sculptures of North Gujarat follows a similar approach, highlighting the prevalent dance style as seen in several temple sculptures.

This unity and close inter-relationship between the arts of dancing, sculpture and architecture is also reflected in the literature of the period. The Chalukya rule was a golden era in the cultural life of Gujarat. The religious needs of the people created a demand for sculptures and paintings; and consequently, guilds of sculptors, architects and painters came to be established in various parts of the country. The court poets and writers vied with one another to give expression

to their creative urges. And the fall-out has been a staggering body of literature that abounds in arresting imagery relating to dance.

The great Hemachandracharya, a contemporary of Siddharaja, wrote his classic *Dvyashraya Kavya*, and other scholarly works including *Kavyanushasana*, *Dhatuparayana*, *Chhandonushasana*, *Pramanamimamsa*, *Yogashastra*, *Trishashti-shalakapurushacharita* which rightly earned him the title 'ocean of knowledge'. He attracted around him several gifted literary figures who accepted him as their preceptor and emulated him. Among his disciples were Ramachandra and Gunachandra, the authors of the *Natyadarpana*; Mahendrasuri, Vardhamanagani, Devachandra, Udayachandra, Yashashchandra, Balachandra. Foremost among them was indeed Ramachandra who was considered so great a *vidvan* that he ranked next in order to Hemachandracharya himself. Ramachandra wrote many Sanskrit plays—*Raghuvilasa*, *Nalavilasa*, *Yaduvilasa*, *Satyaharishchandra*, *Nirbhayabhimavyayoga*, *Mallikamakarandaprakarana*, *Vanamalanatika*, *Kaumudi-mitrana* and *Yadavobhyudaya*. Among his poems, *Kumaraviharashataka* and *Ugadidevatrimshika* are quite well-known.<sup>12</sup> The group came to be known as Hemachandracharya and his literary circle.<sup>13</sup> Besides the Sanskrit compositions, Jain scholars wrote several stories in Prakrit and a large corpus of literature in Apabhramsha. During the time-span of nearly three hundred and fifty years, a rich literary movement flourished, reflecting the social and cultural life of the people.

The first ever available Sanskrit drama written in Gujarat appears to be *Karnasundari* of the poet Bilhana who was originally from Kashmir, but had like many of his contemporaries, sought royal patronage in other parts of India. He lived in Gujarat during the reign of Karnadeva Solanki, Bilhana's drama is modelled on Kalidasa's *Malavikagnimitra* and Harsha's *Ratnavali*. The *nayika* of the play, *Karnasundari*, is the daughter of Mayanalla, the king of Karnataka, and the future mother of Siddharaja. Legend has it that she was proficient in classical dance and it is possible that she might have brought in her marriage party a troupe of dancers. It is recorded that the play was staged at Patan during the *Yatra* festival of Adinath in Shantyutsavagraha.

The tradition of the Sanskrit drama and the Sanskritik *parampara* naturally included the enactment of dance which was an integral part of drama. In *Trishashti-shalakapurushacharita*,<sup>14</sup> Hemachandra offers a detailed description of a dramatic performance which included dance. The other dramas which deserve mention are Yashapala's *Mohaparajayanataka*, Vijayapala's *Draupadiswayamvara*, Someshwara's *Ullagharaghava*. Of these, *Mohaparajaya* was staged in Kumaravihara at Tharade in the year 1176 A.D., and Balachandra's *Karunavijaya* was staged during the *Yatramohotsava* of Rishabhanatha on Shatrunjaya in the year 1221 A.D. *Ullagharaghava* was staged at Dwaraka's Jagat Mandir during the reign of Viradhavala.

The dance sculptures provide tangible evidences of an intangible art. Though situated at different sites and created at different intervals, they present a compact and unified picture of a homogeneous culture that was evolving in Gujarat during the reign of the Hindu kings, when Patan was the seat of government. These sculptures reveal certain characteristic features and belong to a composite geographical area.





1. Nrtiyamandapa, Modhera Temple.

Vachanacharya Sudhakalasha devotes the fifth and the sixth chapters of *SUS* to the art of dancing. It is called *Nrtiyapaddhatiparikshana adhyaya*. Though the text is critically edited by Dr. U. P. Shah, there is no commentary which can shed more light on the nature of the dance movements. In its absence, a comparison is made of the *SUS* text with various texts like the *Natyashastra* (NS)<sup>15</sup>, the *Abhinaya Darpana* (AD)<sup>16</sup>, the *SR*, the *MU*, and the *NRK* in order to study the similarities and the variations. The annexed table reveals that, in the main, the *Natyashastra* tradition prevailed with a highly developed *margi* aspect.

We notice that the ceilings of the temples have exquisite carvings of female dancers, the *kinvara-s* and the *gandharva-s*. The women who dance here are more sophisticated. Their elongated limbs, the attenuated waists and the rounded torso leave an impression of remarkable plastic skill. We notice that the *urdhvajanu chari*<sup>17</sup> is most popular and the related movements of the *urdhvajanu karana*<sup>18</sup> are found in many variations. Sometimes, the knee is raised to the level of the chest. In the dance sculptures of Taranga, the *prishthasvastika karana* is depicted profusely and the turning of the torso on *trika* and the *vivartana* of the *kati* are found to be a common feature.<sup>19</sup>

The repetition of the *svastika* of the leg from the *sthitavarta chari*<sup>20</sup> with the feet either in *samapada*, *kunchita*, *suchi* and *agratalasanchara* with *urdhvangushtha*, mentioned in the *SUS*,<sup>21</sup> is common in the dance sculptures of all these temples.



2. A pillar detail in the sabhamandapa, Modhera Temple



The bracket figures, the *shalabhanjika*-s, the *yakshi*-s and the dancers surrounding the seated deities abound in *svastika* positions. Another *chari* often seen is the *baddha chari*.<sup>22</sup> We come across examples of *bhujangatrasita*<sup>23</sup>, *bhujanganchita*<sup>24</sup>, and the related movements of the *karana*-s in all the temples. Besides these *karana*-s, the depiction of *unmatta*, *suchi*, *ardhasuchi* and *suchividdha karana*-s in the dance scenes from Modhera are noteworthy.

The *karana*-s which suggest movements of walking in the sky, are dealt with by Bharata in the *Natyashastra* while discussing the gait of the flying figures.<sup>25</sup> Dr. Vatsyayan has elucidated the concept of the *vrishchika karana*<sup>26</sup> emphasising the flexed or the arched tail of the scorpion with the depiction of one leg flexed at the knee, with the lower leg stretched or upturned. The leg with the *samapada* foot supports the weight of the body. The movement is suggested by the leg thrust back with the foot upturned. The stretched leg suggests the dynamic movement of flight.

The examples of the *vrishchika karana*-s and their variations are seen in the sculptures of the Mahaviraswami temple and the Kumbharia group of temples. Four armed deities are depicted, having different attributes and with weapons or objects in their hands. But, their sculptured figures suggest the *vrishchika* of the leg with the bend at the knee in a flexed leg with the raised calf at the hip level.



3 Sculptures in the *sabhamandapa*, Modhera Temple

The *uromandala*, the *pakshavanchita*, the *hamsasya*, the *pataka*, the *katakamukha* and other *hasta*-s are found sculpted with considerable accuracy. The positioning of the *devangana*-s on the *jangha*-s of the *mandoavara*-s of the *Chaturmukha mahaprasada* temples find accurate description in accordance with the *Kshirarnava* text<sup>27</sup>. They abound in examples of *Menaka*, *Lilavati*, *Vidhichita*, *Sundari*, *Shubha*, *Hamsa*, *Sarvakala*, *Karpuramanjari* etc

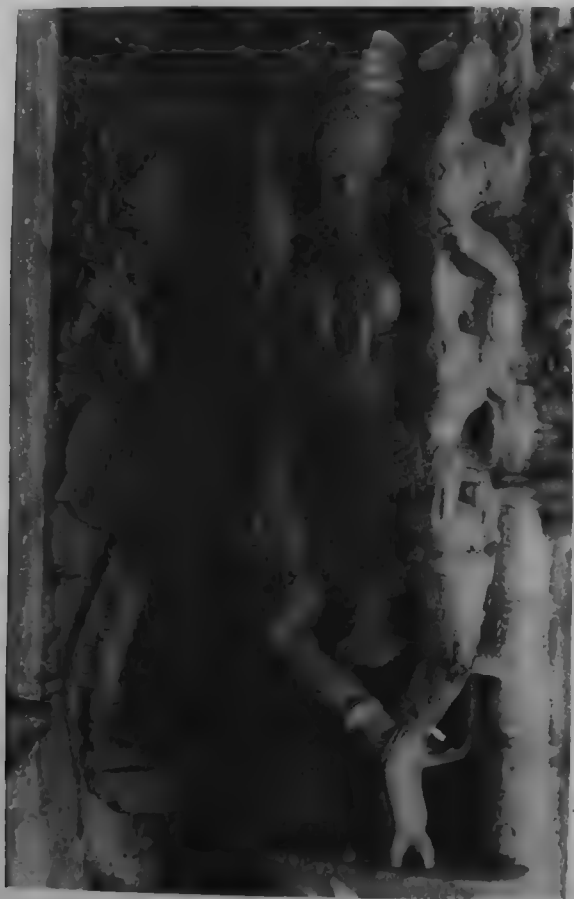
The *nrityamandapa* of the Modhera temple (1026 A.D.) has several dance sculptures which suggest a strong *Natyashastra* tradition. The temple was dedicated to Surya. The *nrityamandapa*, as the name indicates, was specifically constructed for the dance (Illus. 1). The various pillars depict dancers sculpted in arresting postures.

In Illustration 2, the maiden on the right has *svastika* position of the left foot in *samapada* without any bend at the knee. The *kati* is in *udvahita*. The other



4 Dancer in *baddha chari*, Dewwada Temple

leg in *kunchita pada* when brought down on the ground would form *suchi chari*. The right hand is in *ardhachandra*, resting on the thigh. The left hand with an object is in *pataka*. The head is in *anchita*. According to KSV, the *devangana* with a *kalasha* in the *hasta* is classified as *Jaya devangana*. The maiden on the left is in *urdhvajanu chari*. The left leg is in *samapada* and the right leg is raised in *kunchita*. The *hasta-s* are in *uromandala*, with variations in positions of the fingers. The *vivartana* of the torso is seen with the movement on the *trika*. The *karana* associated with this *chari* is *urdhvajanu karana*.



5 Dance sculptures, Parshvanatha Temple, Delwada

An example of *unmatta karana* is seen in Illustration 3. The *hasta* near the shoulder is in *hamsapaksha* and the other extended arm is in *lata hasta* which suggests a position after a *rechita* movement. The legs are in outward *kshipta* position with the feet in *kunchita*. The head is in *parivahita*. A similar sculpture with a slight variation is found in the Devi temple at Chidambaram.



6 Dance sculptures, Parshvanatha Temple, Delwada

The Delwada temples on Mount Abu reveal a great variety of dance movements carved with matchless skill in marble. KSV gives the classification of *anjaliabaddha devangana* as *Chandravali*. Illustration 4 shows the dancer in *baddha chari* with the *svastika* position of the thighs and the shanks, both the feet in *samapada* and the crossing of the knees clearly depicted. In *baddha chari*, the *valana* position and the *svastika* of the thighs are prominent features of movement. The *hasta-s* are in *anjali*. The maidens on either side of the central figure are in *urdhvajanu karana*, with *kshipta* position of the knees.

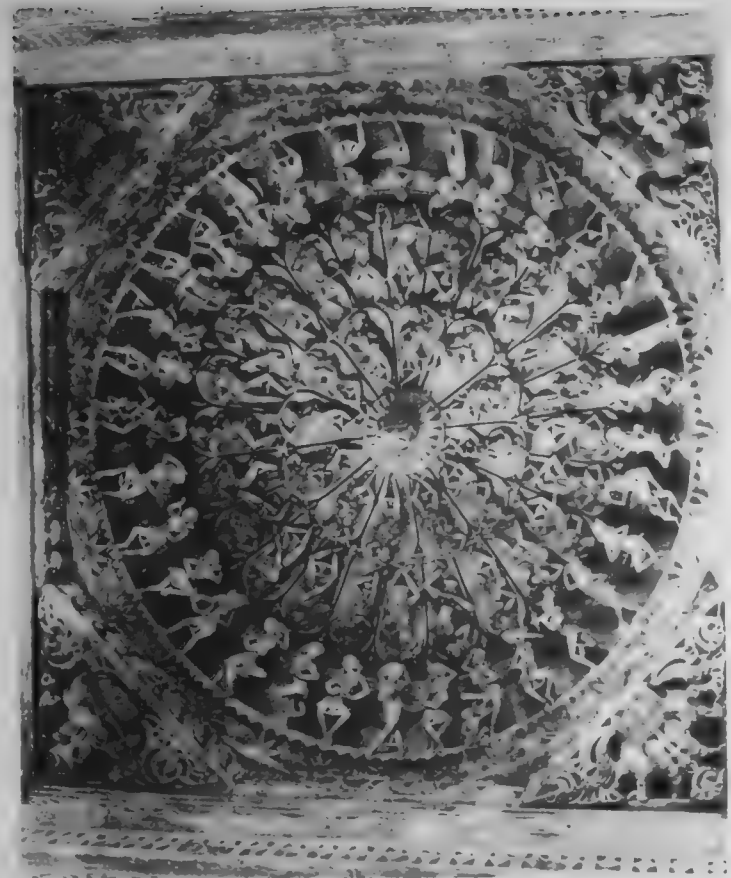


7 Dance scene. Tejpal Temple, Delwada.

In another example of *baddha chari* (Illus. 5), the maiden on the left is looking into a mirror. According to KVS, a *devangana* holding a mirror and in a dancing pose is classified as *Vidhichita*. The *hasta* holding the mirror is in *mushti*; the other over the head with a *rechita* and flexion is in *tripataka hasta*. The head is in *nata* and *avadhuta* position. The *parshva* is in *nata* and *prasarita*. The sculpture on the right is of a *nrittamurti* with the *kshipta* of the knees and *svastika* of the feet with the right foot in *agratalasanchara* and separate toes, mentioned in the *SUS* as *urdhvangushtha*. The left leg is in *samapada*. The right arm above the right knee is in *pataka hastā* and the left in *alapallava*.

Another variation of *urdhvajanu karana* (Illus. 6) shows the dancer (on the right) where the right leg is raised at the hip level and rests on the knee of the left leg with the *samapada* foot. The hip is in *udvahita*. The right arm is flexed in an *udvahita* movement with *katakamukha hasta* seen on the *vaksha*. The left arm is seen in a manner after the *karihasta* position. The *urdhvajanu karana* or *chari* does not mention the specific position of the arms. This is an example of both a *chari* and a *karana* which are pronouncedly *urdhvajanu* in nature. The *nrittamurti* to the left has *svastika* of the feet with the right leg in *agratalasanchara*.

A dance scene from the ceiling of the Tejpal temple shows dancers surrounding the seated deity in the centre (Illus. 7). The line of the dancers surrounding the seated deity presents a great sense of movement. The two dancers closest to the deity have a *svastika chari* position of the legs with a very clear extension of the torso. Usually, the torso twists round the waist or there is a simple bend. Dr. Vatsyayan observes that this slant of the torso is rare. The other dancers (on the left of the deity) with the lifted leg and the toe held by the dwarf in each case suggest *avartita* or *parshva*



8 Ceiling Tejpal Temple, Delwada

movement. The waist is either turned around in *rechita* or it is almost *vivartita*. In all these figures, the *samapada* foot is clear. The *kunchita* foot in case of the other figures is closer to *agratalasanchara*. The dancers with their legs in a crossed position are in *sthitavarta chari*.

Unparalleled in the execution of the central pendent and superb craftsmanship, the ceilings are absolute marvels of sculpture. The most famous ceiling (Illus. 8), with 32 statuettes on the outer circle of the lotus petals, 24 statuettes in the second inner circle and 12 statuettes in the innermost third circle, is replete with dance movements. From the first big outer circle containing 32 dancers, beginning clockwise from the dancer in *baddha chari*, we come across interesting

examples of *chari* and *karana* movements. The third dancer on the left in *prishthasvastika karana*, the fourth and the sixth in *urdhvajanu karana*, the ninth in *urdhvajanu chari* (an example of *Menaka devangana* according to KVS), the eleventh in *syandita chari*, the twenty-eighth in *baddha chari* and the twenty-ninth in *urdhvajanu* with *prishthasvastika* position are depicted with considerable accuracy. In the inner circle, clockwise, the third dancer is seen in *dola hasta* in *chatura karana*,



9 *Nrittamurti*, Mahaviraswami Temple, Kumbharia



10 Sculpture in Mahaviraswami Temple, Kumbharia

the thirteenth in *prishthasvastika* with *rechita* of the arms, the sixteenth in *kari hasta karana* with *vivartana* of the torso and turning on *trika* and most of the remaining dancers are in *svastika chari*. The noteworthy dancer in the innermost circle is the ninth one in *bhujangatrasita karana*.

A distinct development is found in the sculpting of figures in medieval temples. Most of the figures are seen turning on the axis on *trika*. The *karana*-s suggested are of the *prishthasvastika* variety.





11 Jwalamalini, Taranga Temple

In Illustration 9, we have an example of a *nrittamurti* depicting this movement. The torso is in *vivartita* with the left leg in *samapada* and *kshipta* knee. The right foot is in *agratalasanchara* with the bend at the knee. Of the four arms, the upper arms have *hasta*-s holding the flute in *pataka*. The hand beating the drum is also in *pataka*. The head is in *nata*. This and the next illustration are from the Mahaviraswami temple of the Kumbharia group (1062 A.D.).

The flying figures found in the sculptures come under the discussion of the *vrishchika karana* where the feet are in a flexed position with an arch similar to that seen in the leg of a scorpion. It suggests a significant way of depicting movement through the postures of sitting, kneeling, extensions and flexions which in turn suggest flying and leaping. Some of the *karana*-s in this category are *vrishchika kuttila*, *lata vrishchika*, *vrishchika rechita*, *vrishchika* and *mayuralalita*.

Illustration 10 shows a figure with the right leg bent at the knee with the *samapada* foot placed on the floor on which the weight of the body rests. The

torso is in *nata* position and there is *prasarpita* of the *parshva*. The left leg has the extension with raised calf at the hip level. The right arm has a weapon and the *hasta* is in *mushti*. The other *hasta* is in *tripataka*. The two arms are raised at the back holding a lotus in *katakamukha hasta*. The figure is in *vrishchika karana* giving an impression of flying while sitting on an imaginary seat.

From the Taranga temple (1185 A.D.), the eight-armed dancing goddess (Illus. 11) is seen in *urdhavajanu karana*. Dr. U. P. Shah has identified the goddess as *Jwalamalini* of the Jain pantheon with her vehicle, the *vahana* Bidala, and the various attributes and the *ayudha*-s held in eight arms. The *kshipta* position of the knees is seen with the right leg in *samapada* foot and the raised left leg with *kunchita* and *agratalasanchara* foot position and *urdhavangushtha* toe facing the floor. The arms have several formations, one of which is *uromandala hasta* with *dhanusha* in one hand in *mushti*. The goddess is flanked on either side by two dancers in *svastika chari* and in *uromandala* or *pakshavanchita hasta*-s. The figure on the right has one leg in *samapada* and the one at the back in a cross position in *agratalasanchara* with the *kshipta* position of the knee. Both the dancers have their heads in *nata* position.

The temple, as a focal point of rituals and theatrical performances, and the literature which received impetus from the kings and the merchant class, contributed towards the rich growth of culture during the medieval period in Gujarat. The art of dance also scaled new heights with due emphasis on the *margi* aspect of the *Natyashastra* tradition.

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27. *KSV*, Ch. XX, *Shl.* 113-16.

TABLE

*Pada* (Feet)

S. No.	<i>Natyashastra</i>	<i>Abhinaya Darpana</i>	<i>Sangita-ratnakara</i>	<i>Manasollasa</i>	<i>Sangitopanishatsaroddhara</i>	<i>Nrityaratna-kosha</i>
1.	<i>Sama</i>	—	<i>Sama</i>	Except the	—	As in <i>Sangita-ratnakara</i>
2.	<i>Kunchita</i>	—	<i>Kunchita</i>	first three the	<i>Kunchita</i>	
3.	<i>Agratala-sanchara</i>	—	<i>Agratala-sanchara</i>	rest are	<i>Agratala</i>	
4.	<i>Anchita</i>	—	<i>Anchita</i>	mentioned on the lines of the	—	—
				<i>Sangitaratna-kara</i>		
5.	<i>Suchi Parshniga</i>	—	<i>Suchi</i>	One position is mentioned as <i>Ninja</i>	—	
6.	<i>Tryashra</i>	—	—	—	Padakarma	—
7.	<i>Udghattita</i>	—	<i>Udghattita Tadita</i>	—	<i>Udghattita Urdhvangushtha</i>	
			<i>Ghatitotsedha</i>		<i>Sthanu</i>	
			<i>Ghattita</i>		<i>Ghattita</i>	
			<i>Mardita</i>		<i>Ardhaghattita</i>	
			<i>Agraga</i>		<i>Rechitaghattita</i>	
			<i>Parshniga</i>		<i>Parivesha</i>	
			<i>Parshvaga</i>		<i>Kundala</i>	
					(Note 1)	

Note: 1 It is only *Sangitopanishatsaroddhara* (*SUS*) which separates the *Pada* and the *Padakarma*. As can be seen from the comparative table, the *Udghattitapada* of the *Natyashastra* and the *Sangitaratnakara* is mentioned as *Padakarma* in *SUS*. However, *Urdhvangushtha* is found in the sculptures under review in a very pronounced manner.

## Contemporary Music in the Philippines and Southeast Asia

José Maceda

There are two kinds of contemporary music in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. One is popular music, that is rock and roll and all kinds of folk and jazz, with changing examples from year to year. It is mostly young people who take to this music as singers, performers, composers, song-writers, arrangers, participants and listeners. In Southeast Asia, one hears this music everywhere—in homes, offices, hotels, public places, inside restaurants, stores, public transportation. It is played over loudspeakers, activated by cassettes, tapes, long-playing machines and broadcast over radio and television.

In the Philippines there are more than a hundred radio stations, and, in Manila alone, there are around fifty stations, most of which play music composed by foreign as well as local musicians who have mastered the idiom. Periodically, in song contests, song-writers create new works and employ famous singers to introduce them to hundreds and thousands of enthusiastic fans who become transmitters of a musical euphoria. Some composers or singers earn a great deal of money and travel to different countries performing the latest song successes. A few years ago, one Philippine work in particular, called *Anak*, was a very big success in Japan, where it was sung in Japanese, and imitated similarly in Indonesia and Malaysia where it was thought to be a Malaysian composition, for it was sung in the local language. Then, the song traversed the ocean, reached Honolulu and the U.S.A., where Filipinos were overwhelmed by this music.

Filipino musicians are very adept in the performance of popular music of this kind. Combos and jazz bands in the principal night spots in Asia (from Tokyo to Jakarta), in Australia (in the south) and India and the Middle East (in the west), are frequently made up of Filipinos. More than any other Asian group of popular music performers, the Filipino musician is recognized to be a natural exponent and performer of popular western music. There is a historical background for this phenomenon and for what is called the innate musicality of Filipinos.

When Spain established colonies in the western hemisphere, she also founded others in the eastern hemisphere, principally in the Philippines, imposing Christianity and Latin ways of behaviour (including music) on the population. In the sixteenth century, around the time when Spain introduced the Catholic religion, military control and a civilian government, she also brought in western music through the Church. As soon as a native church was built, friars (who had undergone some musical training in Spain before going to the islands) gathered boys in their parishes and taught them the Gregorian chant as well as the flute and the organ. Since churches were built in hundreds of villages all over the archipelago, many Filipinos soon became Christians. In the process, a kind of folk music gradually took shape, with different characteristics, depending upon the area or language group where that music developed. A form of Latin musical expression, characterized by a diatonic melody and a simple harmonic accompaniment, became the musical language of thousands of Filipinos.

It became natural for Filipino citizens reared in a western mode—in dress, manners, education, belief, and, to a certain extent, in language (Spanish was limited to the intelligentsia)—to express themselves in a western idiom. The original music of gongs, bamboo instruments and singing in rituals was lost to about ninety percent of the people. This music is still alive and very strong among the remaining ten percent of those who were never christianized. Living in the south or other remote parts of the archipelago, they were unaffected by western popular music. Among the westernized groups, song-composers and musicians slowly moved away from the provincial folk song and took to American jazz and other popular songs with a naturalness that might seem strange to fellow Asians with a Buddhist, Muslim or Hindu background. And yet, it is this western popular music which was sought by an international audience in hotels and night clubs. And so the Filipino musician readily supplied that need. Today, even with competition from excellent performers from all parts of Asia, the Filipino combo player and singer enjoys a certain prestige which has not been lost through the decades.

The effect of this kind of music on the Filipino's frame of mind and behaviour is that he expresses himself somewhat like a westerner, rather than like an easterner, although, from the outside, he might seem to belong to any Asian nationality. His education—in the elementary grades in school, at college and at the university—is, on the whole, not substantially different from that in the west. The medium of instruction is English, and reading material is almost entirely based on American sources. As a result of this western training, coupled with the influence of the mass media, imperceptibly extolling the 'good life' derived from consumer and luxury goods—from soaps, jeans, air-conditioners, cars, four-star hotels to high-rise condominiums—a sizeable segment of the population is being conditioned to behave like their counterparts in the west as well as in the east, for a similar cultural influence is seen to operate in Asian cities.

Western popular music then appears as a vehicle for the expression of values which denote a life of relative luxury, which the Third World seeks to emulate, inspite of the glaring disparity between its rich and poor. The 'rich' segment includes the very rich who can afford luxury items and the less rich, equally attracted by this life-style. It is, therefore, not unusual for one to see an employee own a car and live in poor surroundings. The danger of this kind of influence is that the people, who seem to be attracted to this manner of living, are tempted to pine for commodities beyond their means, and this leads them to corruption. It is not surprising to see (in this category) people making "legitimate" profits based on accepted business deals with high returns, steep rates of interest, percentages or commissions, and there are also many others, downright swindlers and criminals, who similarly crave for this kind of "better" living. In effect, then, contemporary popular music supports an idea of a life-style and a philosophy of material living which the mass media lauds as viable for all mankind. This life-style is foreign to millions of Asians reared in relative poverty and a tradition of a restricted idea of wealth, of its dangers, of a life of moderation, thrift and perseverance.

Another kind of contemporary music heard in the Philippines and Southeast Asia is "erudite" European music, mainly based on the classicism of the eighteenth century and the romanticism of the nineteenth century. Again, in the Philippines,

appreciation of this kind of music has a historical background, starting, as has been said previously, with church songs in the seventeenth century, evolving into folk music with a Mediterranean quality. Performers of folk music gradually grouped themselves into string orchestras and brass bands playing in yearly celebrations in honor of the Christian saints. In Manila, in the nineteenth century, music for visiting Italian opera companies was provided by performers who were Filipinos, playing not only the accompaniment to singers, but also overtures and intermission numbers. Light music by Meyerbeer, Suppé, Offenbach, Ponchielli, Strauss, Rossini, Chueca, Thomas formed their repertoire, with similar versions played on the piano by adolescents and young women at soirées and gatherings of an élite who spoke Spanish and knew Italian operatic airs which were easily imitated by their domestics and the public.

From small orchestras and bands there developed, in the 1930's, real symphony orchestras, perhaps one of the earliest of the kind in East Asia. They performed the symphonies of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, and piano or violin concerti with Filipinos as soloists, but with foreign conductors followed by Filipinos who had studied abroad or who were noted composers or performers. The Filipino aristocracy as well as foreign businessmen and amateurs made up the audience for this kind of music. It is important to recall here that it was the Philippine experience in Latin ways and feeling in the course of the last three hundred years and not mere technical proficiency in handling musical instruments that offered genuine results in the performance of a type of concert music which is, after all, foreign to Asia.

The cultural-musical effect in the Filipino mind of both the western popular and "erudite" or "learned" music, has developed through such a prolonged period of time, and it is so devastating that although the Filipino retains dozens of his native languages and many deep cultural traits, he, (with some exceptions), understands no other music except western music. As a corollary, his studies in schools and universities (which are almost exact copies of western schools) have prepared him to serve western institutions; and so, his outlook of life does not appear largely different from a western view. Again, this effect in the Philippines mirrors what is certainly happening, although differently, in other parts of the Third World.

Western popular and "learned" music has varying degrees of influence in places like India, Java and Thailand, where traditional music is strong, or where colonization or western influence did not leave as widespread an effect of change as in the Philippines. Nevertheless, in many parts of Asia, acceptance of popular music among a vast segment of the population especially in cities, as well as of "learned" music among a privileged few, cannot be denied.

This brings us now to contemporary music of the "avant-garde" style which started in Europe in the 1950's. In the Philippines, the trend began in the 1960's when this writer conducted the works of Varèse and Xenakis in programmes which presented at the same time traditional Philippine music of gongs and lutes, an esoteric Chinese ensemble of strings and his personal creations, employing native instruments and voices in technics of the avant-garde.

To a public attuned mainly to the music of Beethoven, Chopin and Debussy.

this music came as a complete shock. This was the first time that native gongs and a primitive lute ever appeared in a concert hall in Manila, music heard only in villages in simple surroundings and in very remote parts of the country which the majority of concert-goers ignored completely. In opposition to these crude instruments that produced refined music and the magnetic effect of gong sounds, sophisticated Chinese music of strings practised mainly in southern China, with a very dry sound, an intense discipline in its execution, an economy of effort as well as an aristocratic refinement of sound, was also presented before the Philippine concert public for the first time. This was also an occasion to introduce the idea of stagnancy in sounds and a study of the physics of sound in the music of Varèse, and especially of Xenakis' probabilities, masses, clouds, transformations and Poisson's Law, then still very controversial in Europe and exemplified in his work, *Achorripsis*, to which a group of eighteen select Filipino musicians lent their cordial cooperation. It was during the 1960's that this author also introduced his new creations to a Philippine audience who knew nothing of the richness of a native Southeast Asian tradition, and especially of how this wealth can be re-interpreted not only in an avant-garde music idiom, but also as a concept that does not betray the traditional culture to which that music belongs.

The rapid changes in musical style that started in the 1950's in Europe and America, veering from the music of Hindemith, Bartók, the French school and even Schoenberg and Stravinsky, did not leave Asia, or at least some musicians in Asia, insensitive to those departures. In the last few years, in the concerts of Asian composers in Taipei, Manila, Bangkok, Seoul and Hongkong, much of the traditional nineteenth century European music influence was still noticeable. A serial style prevailed in Korea, but others began working with traditional instruments like *kayagum* and the *changko*, while, in Japan, electronic music and the use of the *koto* and *shakuhachi* executed with artistry by experts in an avant-garde style, proved very effective. The Chinese *pipa* of the northern variety is a special vehicle for treatment in a contemporary language, because of a pyrotechnical virtuosity which is a part of its tradition and which modern composers exploit to advantage. In Thailand, a composer treated the Thai *piphat* band in a technic of pointillism and musique concrète, with the result that although the orchestra gained a new sound dimension, the whole character of its original music was lost. In Indonesia, musical interest in the new also attracts experimentation in dance, principally in Jakarta, Jogjakarta and Surakarta, where young musicians and choreographers team together to create dance-dramas that are a mixture of Balinese, Javanese and modern movements, with an introspective and, at the same time, an exuberant treatment of *gamelan* sounds.

In the Philippines, more than a decade after the first use of avant-garde idioms in native music instruments, young composers at the University of the Philippines are getting to understand this language. A fresh musical fermentation is taking shape in an atmosphere induced by genuine musical research in the music of the Philippines and Asia; in classes and personal as well as group discussions about village music aesthetic; in consciousness of the importance of rituals, of concepts of time, of languages and populations of Asia, of a certain work ethic, of the teaching of Asian performance groups (bossed gongs, flat gongs, bamboo instruments, Chinese string instruments, Javanese *gamelan*) without losing contact with avant-garde music in the west or studies in ethnomusicology.

For example, this year, a whole two-hour programme began with a prelude in the open air (by Jonas Baes), consisting of performers playing simple instruments and singing a melody of two tones, walking for half an hour around the garden and inside the building, preparing the public for the "concert" itself. Inside the hall a musical interlude (by Chino Toledo) greeted the audience as they found their seats. This interlude came back between two numbers, thus binding the music numbers of the whole evening. In the third number of the programme, the composer (Verne de la Pena) used the whole audience as performers, reciting a poem in different densities of participation, while a few instrumentalists supplied interludes connecting parts or providing a counterpoint to the massive vocal enunciations. A fourth composer (Mary Jane Po) used electronic music, native instruments and play of words which have a contemporary social and political significance.

In essence, avant-garde music in Europe and America represents a rejection of a traditional life as represented in the music of the nineteenth century, or even in the masters of the early twentieth century. It marks a search for another musical expression or another way of life. To the extent that Third World composers can transmit their ideas in a musical language that has a relevance to contemporary events, another way of life and acceptance of things can become more open and clear to listeners of that music. The forum for such musical expression is not only in international conferences but also in country and provincial festivals that are increasingly becoming more world-wide in their programmes. Perhaps, a music that is still to develop need not be circumscribed by the present avant-garde, even as in these last decades that avant-garde has been moving away from a serial music, a music of chance, *alea*, and electronic music. Works which speak a new language should be heard more often. In that way, freedom of search into the unknown, so dear to men of thought since the sixteenth century, would enlarge horizons to include the ways of thinking of composers, who may have something to contribute to the changing world of today.



## Researches in Folk Performing Arts\*

### Aims, objectives and relevance

Ashok Ranade

It is advisable to begin with a clarification of some of the terms in the title.

*Aims, objectives, research and relevance* are terms that need not be assumed to have a universal and accepted connotation.

In brief, *aims* can be defined as the general goals to be attained through methodical efforts. Compared to the *aims*, *objectives* are less general. In fact, they are to be understood as the more concrete goals located midway between the initiation of an activity and the attainment of the aims. *Research* is defined as a diligent and systematic inquiry or investigation into a subject in order to discover or revise facts, theories, applications etc. *Relevance* is a variable degree of appropriateness of the efforts to the needs sought to be satisfied through the former. To an extent, the definitions offered here can be further concretized by relating them to the theme under discussion.

Given this background, what can be the aims of the researchers in folk performing arts? The aims are to carry out a complete investigation of a particular folk culture with the intention of enumerating, describing, classifying and comparing forms of folk expression. Further, the aims, by relating investigations to the contemporary way of life, attempt to diminish the intensity of the adverse effects of the contingent and independent operations of technological and communicational revolutions. These are often expressed in the cumulative disintegration of a societal mind.

Stated in this manner, the aims can easily appear ambitious, vague and too demanding! To use a modern term of abuse, they could be dubbed as impractical or unrealistic. However, this should neither surprise researchers nor deter them. The preambles of constitutions or the revered charters of human rights, the Ten Commandments and the like also exhibit similar qualities because it is in their nature to do so. All aims are universally and deliberately set up as eternal challenges. They are the invariable ultimates in every ideological quest. There is no reason to feel apologetic if the aims seem to be too expansive because their being so has a function in the larger scheme of things.

Unlike aims, research-objectives are inherently more specific and variable. The objectives change according to the results desired. However, one must remember that the changes are in the overall orientation of the effort involved and not in its quality. In other words, no particular orientation can claim innate superiority over others. The sole requirement to be kept in mind is that every orientation must be in consonance with the objective in view. Every misplaced orientation is sure to cause a loss in the utility of research. Objectives and orientations have to match. Speaking musically, they need to be tuned to each other. Once again, the position can be directly connected with the theme under discussion.

\*This article is based on a paper presented at the seminar on 'A Research Programme for Folk Performing Arts' organised by The Indian National Theatre in Bombay on the 27th and 28th of August 1983

The objectives of researches in folk performing arts can be two-fold. Firstly, to collect data and investigate facts having a bearing on the non-art aspect of the entire scene. For example, the economic status of the performers, their political leanings, their housing standards, their knowledge of modern monetary systems etc., can become themes of research in folk performing arts. All these and similar topics are research-objectives falling within the purview of the non-art aspect. On the other hand, the other set of objectives are distinguished by a clear adherence to the art-aspect. For example, all issues pertaining to actual performance or pre-performance preparations or post-performance appreciative procedures etc. signify art-aspect objectives.

The next step involves matching the more specific and variable objectives with suitable orientations. What are the orientations of research in folk performing arts? They can, to put it briefly, be anthropological, grammatical or performing.

The first orientation, the anthropological one, has the bias of a totality view i.e. the orientation regards folk expression as *one* strand of the total fabric of human life.

Grammatical orientation resolves, or seeks to resolve, a realized or a being-realized folk expression into its constructional aspect. It tries to deduce answers to questions which are asked in order to establish the correctness or otherwise of the expression. Very often, the concepts and discussions pertaining to authenticity revolve around a grammatical centre.

Finally, the performing orientation involves study of any expression as a vehicle designed to create successfully an impact-situation vis-à-vis the audience.

It should be clear that the three orientations are fairly and effectively separable in spite of the usual overlappings that inevitably occur in matters of cultural content. Hence, to confuse the three and, as a consequence, to adopt an incorrect methodology etc. may be construed as a sign of investigatory immaturity.

The matter of *relevance* is appropriate at this point. A suitable concord of objectives and orientations is merely one instance of the relevance-phenomenon. However is there not another facet to the relevance-concept operating in a perspective? To put it differently, matching of orientation to objectives is an internal kind of relevance. The appropriateness or otherwise is *within* the research-field which is well-demarcated by the quartet of researcher, objective, orientation and aims. However, the entire activity represented by the quartet forms merely a part of the total life of the community. Hence, is it not incumbent for the research-field, as realized by the quartet, to have a relationship of relevance with society at large? This is the social relevance plank that has provided so much support to an agitated view of the art-situation in recent years.

It is clear that no blanket statement is possible as the research-quartet mentioned earlier is too complex to allow such a luxury. In a phased review, it should be obvious that aims hold their sway in an abstract, rarefied and philosophical atmosphere and consequently all research is bound to be always relevant in respect of aims. Aims are so accommodative, ideological and idealistic

that research being directed at such aims can hardly be accused of irrelevance. The ultimates of the aims have a steadying firmness, a liberalizing comprehensiveness and the capacity to engage the energies of generations to come. Thus, all the irrelevance that generates anxiety in the field of researches in folk performing arts is caused by a mismatching between objectives and orientations. As far as the Indian situation is concerned, this is the type of irrelevance that one detects on a majority of occasions.

Perhaps it is desirable to restate the position on the relevance-issue with recourse to the current terminology of social commitment and social relevance. In this context, it is maintained that research should make for a better life, that it should be a part of a larger ameliorative programme, in order to prove its social relevance. Since this is the ultimate aim of all human activity, it could surely be used as a guideline. But, as explained earlier, aims are not to be confused with objectives. Therefore, the ultimate (aim) could hardly be the same as the immediate (objective) though their mutual dependence cannot be denied. Action-oriented research, a phrase so fondly and widely employed, is a pleonasm because research in itself is action. In fact, action by itself is only a truncated phenomenon—the fuller version of which is the white heat of thought—a result of intense mental activity and its concretization! To put it less rhetorically, action-oriented research, which social relevance likes to swear by, is, in reality, a consequence of the objective—orientation correlation that has already been described. If one is aware of the rightful distinction between pedantic and academic research, then it is the latter which successfully strikes an equilibrium between objectives and orientation. All academic research is relevant and social relevance is one of its important contributions.

The all-round acceptance of folk research from all quarters evokes only a mixed response. It is true that at all levels—individual, institutional, national and international—research-programmes are encouraged. But is the encouragement founded on proper grounds? Perhaps the time has arrived to do some rethinking and realign the forces in operation. There are clear indications that such a realization, and the consequent recharting of courses followed, is in progress. For example, researchers are anxious to ensure retrieval rather than collection. The revolution in communications and the leap in technological resources have by now been successfully harnessed to collect and preserve human expressions which otherwise might have proved to be too evanescent. Today there is a grave danger that facts and information may outpace the researcher. Attempts to press into service computerized retrieval systems prove that the danger has been sensed. However, the question is, is it a right solution to the problem? Because retrieval could be only of something collected and stored in an orderly manner. The truth is that more advanced communication and technology can hardly equip the researcher to face the challenges involved because the decisions that need to be taken in this respect are of a conceptual nature and can hardly be delegated to computers. It is, therefore, essential to adopt unhesitatingly certain self-critical positions, and if this strategy is followed, the Indian situation poses some fundamental questions.

A very striking feature of most Indian research is the tendency to avoid theorization. There is an obvious reluctance to raise conceptual frameworks which

relate to collected data. This is a serious weakness because such frameworks are essential to ensure the quality of significance in the material collected. No fact or detail is significant *sui generis*. Even though facts or details possess an intrinsic importance, no significance could be assumed unless a wider conceptual framework is in existence. Therefore, mere discovery of facts is not to be equated with carrying out research. It is rather naive to argue that a theoretical or a conceptual framework cannot be thought of unless adequate data is collected. Collection of facts and raising of conceptual frameworks are not successive but simultaneous processes. Further, all concepts are acts of minimal theorization and if due attention is not paid to this ratiocinative truth, more and more irrelevant or at least insignificant facts are likely to be collected. Conceptual frameworks not only confirm facts but also generate them. In all research activities, an emerging hypothesis and a gradually increasing body of facts proceed together. There are no theory-neutral facts and in anthropocentric disciplines it is nearly impossible to come across these intellectual wonders! Non-realization of this fundamental truth has reduced many researches to an indiscriminate collecting activity. Isolated facts are capable of supplying information, they can hardly impart knowledge. Only an active theorization can transform information into knowledge.

There is a deeper reason for the misplaced belief in the importance of bare facts. Research into folk studies in India incorrectly traces its lineage to ethnographic researches. As is known, ethnography deals with scientific and detailed descriptions of a culture while the task of comparatively studying two or more cultures is left to ethnology. It is easy to see that both these approaches adopt a total view model. This model believes that everything is related to everything else and, therefore, to understand any single thing it is necessary to collect data on almost everything. It is obvious why such an approach was adopted in relation to Indian folklore in general. The pioneers in the field were the Germans, the British and, a little later, the Americans. They were sympathetic but alien to the culture they studied. For them, the total model was a necessity—it being a safer strategy to cast the investigating net wider in unknown waters. Pioneers can hardly afford to be selective; by choice, they have to be accommodative. All details, all facts are, therefore, to be revered and collected because potentially all are considered worthy of study. Hence, facts are avidly collected and diligently explained; that is, informatively paraphrased. Perhaps, the tendency to stress the factual may owe its origin to the event that anthropological researches in India were initiated by the Census Authorities in 1872. In fact, the credit of initiation as well as continuance of anthropological studies goes, in a large measure, to the Indian Census Authorities. In addition, it is also possible to argue that the rather obstinate adherence to the ethnographical rather than the cultural line was due to the motives of the British rulers whose desire to learn more about the country was aroused largely by commercial interests. Whatever the reasons, it is true that folk research in Indian remains ethnographic in orientation. However this is not the whole story.

In addition to following the non-selective total-view models tried out by the ethno-disciplines, researchers readily grasped the research-mapping followed by literary students of folk expression, almost totally ignoring, in the process, the performance aspect. Hence place-names, terms, symbols, etc. were subjected to explanations and interpretations with literary and linguistic biases. The same

literary attitude allowed an upper hand to chronology, etymology, genealogy, imagery-studies, stylistic analysis etc. Verbalized expression occupied a central position—it almost continues to do so even today!

It is time we realised that all these strategies of research can yield only fringe-benefits as far as the performing arts are concerned. The chief reason is that these total-view-based, literary strategies miss the core of any performance—that qualitative dimension of the co-ordinated, physio-mental, audience-conditioned act which consists of non-verbalized, improvisatory and impact-guided content. The entire content of folklore is customarily divided into four categories: material culture, oral tradition, arts of performance and customs and superstitions. The first three categories are actualized through craftsmanship, verbal performance and non-verbal enactment respectively. Under the circumstances, one may deduce that three-fourths of the total folkloristic content is dominated by non-literary impulses. Is it not, therefore, a great scholastic mistake to continue the language-literature bias of the past?

It is unfortunate that the nature of performance is forgotten in the established research-processes in folk performing arts. Every performance is a result of a series of decisions arrived at and carried out through the agency of non-verbalized, action-based, physio-mental events accessible to perception in the normal course. Unless attention is focussed on the phenomenon of performance, half of the researches in the folk expression are likely to remain anaemic and bookish shadows of the pious resolve to research.

At this point, a curious weakness of the total-view-model becomes obvious. It is as if the model tries to remain valuationally neutral, presumably out of a desire that such a neutrality is essential to maintain a scholastic detachment in research pursuits. The total-view-model is wary of 'committing the arch sin of 'imposing our framework on their frameworks' and, in this manner, bringing about distortion in the vision obtained. *Prima facie* the position has a certain validity. However, two points raise their heads rather disconcertingly. Firstly, is the 'just'—looking position the cause of a marked indiscrimination in collections? Secondly and more importantly, even if the value-neutral attitude is inevitable in the case of an outsider and also desirable for any product of a materially superior or advanced culture studying an alien culture, does it possess the same validity and legitimacy for an insider who undertakes to execute a deliberate, temporary and reversible act of stepping out of his native culture? In other words, do Indians researching into Indian folk expression need to adopt the same conceptual, theoretical and methodological stances as do non-Indians? After all, every ethno-study is to be defined as a study of man through culture and the studies of separated or isolated culture manifestations in the total context of the particular culture involved. The definition of ethno-study has nothing to do with 'which culture is being studied by whom'!

It is instructive to note that though more than a score of disciplines are listed as contributory for students of folk expression, the three major valuational disciplines of ethics, aesthetics and philosophy do not find a place in the listing! As indicated earlier, folk expression as a whole is dominated by performance which, in turn, is a cumulative result of valuational decisions expressed through non-verbal, improvised and deliberately structured events. Hence, how can a researcher in folk performing arts ignore the value-disciplines?

## News and Notes

*Indian National Theatre's Seminar on "A Research Programme for the Folk Performing Arts", Bombay, August 27 and 28, 1983.*

Folklore, as a discipline, has for long been a part of the academic scene. Anthropology has looked at other aspects of folk, especially tribal life, such as life styles, customs, religious traditions etc. But the folk performing arts, barring a few exceptional cases of research by individual scholars such as Shivram Karanth, have received comparatively little academic attention. Institutional research into the folk performing arts is a relatively new phenomenon. Concepts and methodologies of relevance to the field are still in a state of flux. To clarify and stretch the thinking of those individuals and institutions engaged in research on the folk performing arts and to work out a research agenda, the Indian National Theatre, Bombay, with the assistance of the Ford Foundation, Delhi, organized a two-day seminar in Bombay on August 27 and 28, 1983. Among the thirty participants and observers at the seminar were theatre directors who have employed folk traditions for contemporary expression, individual researchers, representatives of institutions working on the folk performing arts, playwrights, archivists and professors of anthropology, sociology and folklore.

The first day's discussions (during the afternoon session) centered around, "Objectives, Values and Contemporary Relevance of Research in the Folk Performing Arts". Dr. Ashok Ranade's lead paper, presented during the session in the morning, posed a number of thought-provoking issues on concepts and stimulated a lively discussion on the 'why', 'who', and 'how' of research. Among the many interesting points covered were: the need to distinguish clearly between the various functions of the arts, especially its religious and entertainment ones; the need to research and document not only past performances but contemporary creations which use folk media; the need for a multidisciplinary approach and, therefore, a multidisciplinary team of researchers; criteria for determining the 'authenticity' of a performance; and the need to approach research from 'cultural' or value-oriented disciplines rather than from a purely anthropological angle.

The second session took off with a lead paper by Prof. Shankara Pillai on research methodology. Other papers read were by Prof. Haridas Bhat and Prof. Chandrashekhara Kambar. Discussion centered around different kinds of research required, criteria for selection of research topics, the adequacy or otherwise of current survey and investigation methods and the correctives required, and identification of research gaps. The importance of action research whereby the researcher worked with folk artistes, and/or modern actors to understand and experiment, was emphasized by many. One important area for such action research was identified as "techniques of presentation of folk performances for a non-rural audience". A number of other areas for research were identified and specific research topics formulated.

Since research is not an end in itself, but a means to an end, and since research in the performing arts, involving audio-visual documentation, is uniquely

vulnerable to exploitation, the third session concerned itself with access to, and utilization and dissemination of research. The two major issues for consideration were: (1) how to ensure that research is utilized and (2) how to avoid exploitation of the artistes and organisations involved in the research. The first issue involves: (a) knowing what is available and where; (b) ensuring that bonafide users have access to material and (c) consideration of costs of dissemination since audio-visual dissemination is expensive. The second issue involves devising guidelines and safeguards to prevent malafide use, such as making copies of records or photos for commercial use without paying royalties to the artistes involved or service charges to the organization which has done the original work.

The papers of Shri P. K. Nair and Smt. Saraswati Swaminathan focussed on the ethical and practical issues involved, especially from the point of view of the archivist. In the ensuing discussion, a number of suggestions were offered for tackling these problems.

'Recommendations for action' occupied the attention of participants at the concluding session. They included training of field investigators, training in documentation and archiving, making an inventory of the holdings of each institution engaged in research and documentation and publication of catalogues, working out guidelines, safeguards and scale of fees for utilization of documented material, organizing workshops for folk artistes so that they might benefit from research, and collaboration between various institutions engaged in research to work out common research programmes, and share questionnaire formats, etc. Very rightly, the seminar was seen as an entrée into the field and as the beginning of a dialogue between participating institutions and individuals to discuss, in greater depth, many of the aspects which could only be touched on at the Bombay seminar. Hopefully, there will be more meetings of this kind to continue the discussion and report on the implementation of its recommendations.

—PUSHPA SUNDAR

*Seminar on Marathi Theatre, organised by Bharatashastra, September 17 and 18, 1983, Ruparel College, Bombay.*

*Bharatashastra*, a theatre monthly, completed a half-decade of publication last month. It celebrated the occasion with a two-day seminar on the Marathi Theatre in the last twenty-five years. Prof. Pushpa Bhawe chaired the proceedings.

Today, there is an inexplicable void in the Marathi experimental theatre. It is not as though anything particularly significant is happening on the commercial stage either. The young and enthusiastic group of amateur artistes, who have been publishing *Bharatashastra*, felt that it was time we assessed the situation to seek

for the causes which have led to the relative decline of experimental or parallel drama. Though the period of the last twenty-five years was mainly the focus of discussions, the inquiry was more theoretical than historical in nature.

'The Possibilities and Limitations of the Theatre Medium' was the topic selected by Amol Palekar for his presentation, which was notable for its clarity and capacity for conceptualization. He dwelt on two aspects: the theatre and its inevitable relationship with the spectator; the theatre and its relationship with other arts like painting, sculpture and music. He emphasized that the logic of the theatre was independent of that of literature, and represented the concept of 'a temporary and willing suspension of disbelief' in a new light. He eloquently described the principle of one core, where artistes, sets, decor, lighting and music should work towards a unified impact. He hinted at the contrasting elements in film and theatre to establish the unique logic of theatre. The same idea was reiterated later by Anant Amemba.

In his paper, Dr. Shreeram Lagoo dwelt on the constraints inhibiting the imagination and inspiration of the dramatist. He explained how entertainment and preaching have been imposed upon the playwright since the nineteenth century. A good play always entertains, but the concept of entertainment as an embellishment, apart from the theme of the play, has ruined several plays. There are very few dramatists who can really visualize a political or a social play. Quite often 'social commitment' is used merely as a contemporary trend. (Dr. Lagoo cited two exceptions to this pattern: *Micchil (Julus)* by Badal Sarkar and *Udhvasta Dharmashala* by Prof. G. P. Deshpande, where the political theme was integral to the play.) He suggested that the common use of folk forms was an exotic exercise. Beyond all these elements, he said, is the real dramatist and his conceptual vigour. But even this cannot be fruitful unless the dramatist can frame a dramatic statement. (He cited the example of the late C. T. Khanolkar in this context.)

There was keen discussion on the ideas outlined in both these papers. Why is it that Marathi plays do not compare well with the modern short story or modern poetry? What is the balance between the written word and the director's concept? Many other issues were also examined: a performance without a dramatist and street theatre; the difference between the impact of the written word and a performance.

Another lively session was devoted to 'The Human Voice and Other Sounds in Performance'. The paper presented by Dr. Ashok Ranade was, as always, precise and clear in its analysis of contemporary theatre practice and the ultimate 'music' in a given performance. He explained how an artiste could train himself in the use of vocal chords and technical devices for effective delivery.

Kamalakar Sonatake spoke on 'Sets, Décor and Lighting in Marathi Plays'. He traced carefully the various efforts made in the commercial, amateur and experimental theatre and the ensuing discussion touched on many practical difficulties encountered in the staging of plays.

Anant Amemba, in his paper, 'Background Music and Musical Effects in the Marathi Theatre', maintained that music is mostly used without a valid



concept and introduced merely as an embellishment. The young music director suggested that a period of meaningful austerity in the use of music would set the balance right.

Ratnakar Matkari read a paper on the importance of the 'star' artiste in the theatre and concluded by saying that ultimately what is important is the dramatist and his words. The Seminar did not exactly agree with his opinion and various problems about acting were not touched upon in this session.

Anant Bhave spoke on 'The Taste of the Marathi Spectator'. A lively discussion followed on the social ethos of Maharashtra and the relationship between existing social tensions and the commercial theatre. Dr. Hemu Adhikari, in his paper on 'The Economics of Theatre as a Profession', contended that a producer invests the major part of his budget on the technical side of a production and a meagre share is reserved for the human element.

The main discussions highlighted the following points: performance is an integrated whole, and 'theatre' does not mean just the theatre within the proscenium arch; no factor or idiom in the theatre should be used merely as an embellishment. There was an undertone of deeper inquiry into the social causes leading to the present state of the commercial and experimental theatre.

As is often the case, only a few practising artistes participated in the Seminar. But a large and responsive audience of young theatregoers attended the discussions and found them stimulating.

—PUSHPA BHAVE

## Obituaries



Hilla Khursedji, Bombay's internationally-acclaimed pianist, died suddenly in London on May 5, 1983, at the very peak of her career. Born on September 9 1950, into a musical family, she showed an unusual interest in the piano even when she was only three years old. Two years later, she became a pupil of Madame Olga Craen, with whom she studied for the next thirteen years.

While still in her twelfth year, Hilla Khursedji made her debut with the Bombay Chamber Orchestra. In 1967, she gained her Licentiate Diploma from the Royal School of Music, London, with distinction, winning the Sir Adrian Boult Cup. 1968 was a momentous year for her. She secured a scholarship to study at the renowned Curtis School of Music, Philadelphia, where Rudolph Serkin, the celebrated pianist and Director of the Institute, started coaching her from the very first year. During her holidays, Hilla gave performances in Bombay, where critics and music-lovers alike, came to regard her as one of the finest pianists India has ever produced.

After her graduation, she went to England to study with Peter Feuchtwanger. There, she won several prizes including the Young Musician of the Year Award for 1977-78. She continued to give concerts in England and abroad. Among the more outstanding of these was her performance at the Ravel Festival at Saint-Jean-de-Luz. Besides, she was fortunate in that several great musicians of our times were present at her recitals and paid warm tributes to her strong technique and wonderful interpretative power.

Her last concert in Bombay was at the Tata Theatre in January 1982.



Dr. Vasantkar Deshpande, doyen among Maharashtra's actor-singers, died of a heart attack on the 30th of July this year. He was sixty-three.

Initiated into the art of music (when still a boy in Nagpur) by Shankarrao Sapre, he trained briefly with Asad Ali Khan of the Patiala *gharana* and Aman Ali Khan of the Bhendi Bazar *gharana*. The Kirana maestro Suresh Mane was also his mentor but Vasantkar's real source of inspiration was Dinanath Mangeshkar. Thus he absorbed various styles to evolve a distinctive *gayaki*, earning from his close friend P. L. Deshpande the affectionate yet appropriate title, Pandit Vasantkar Deshpande.

Though he spent twenty-three years in government service, and even in such remote areas as NEFA, Vasantkar's passion for music never waned. He left this clerical post in 1965, after the phenomenal reception to the Marathi musical *Katkar Kaljat Ghushi*, in which he played the lead. Aftab Hussain Khan, impressing audiences by his chaste Urdu diction and memorable rendering of the songs. In the two ensuing decades he brought back to Marathi *natya sangeet* the vigour and elegance associated with its golden years. In his concerts he impressed connoisseurs and music lovers alike with his versatility, erudition and effortless mastery over classical and semi-classical styles. His contribution in these spheres soon earned him recognition. Vasantkar was elected President of the Marathi Natya Parishad and received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Hindustani Vocal Music in 1982.

## Book Reviews

INTONATION IN NORTH INDIAN MUSIC (A Select Comparison of Theories with Contemporary Practice) by Mark Levy, Biblia Impex Private Limited, New Delhi, 1982, Rs. 100/- (In English).

Levy's monograph is a welcome addition to the increasing American attempts at examining various aspects of Indian music with the aid of modern technology. Levy reviews a number of contributions on the question of actual intonation in the light of theoretical positions concerning the phenomenon. From Bharata to Bhavabhata, from Fox-Strangways to Jairazbhoy and from Deval to Deva is an ambitious arch of authorial positions to cover. Levy does it succinctly. For realizing his own special contribution, Levy concentrates on analyzing ten recorded examples of eight performers for six *raga-s* and 1,213 individual pitch readings with tape-recorders, loop-repeaters, variable high-pass and low-pass filters and a strobotuner to help him. Levy concludes that there is considerable flexibility in intonation at all levels in performances of Hindustani music and, further, that there is no correspondence between the practice and the theoretical models of intonation put forward by various authorities at various periods. Levy's oft-repeated and justifiable contention is that the traditional Indian preoccupation has been to attempt a reconciliation of the ancient texts and actual practice. Levy not only wants to lay stress on actual practice but also seeks to profit by the more objective, modern audio-visual equipment and scientific laboratory-methodology.

Levy examines recorded performances of Amir Khan (3), Niaz and Faiyaz Ahmad Khan (5), Bismillah Khan (1) and Zia Moinuddin Dagar (1) and arrives at the general conclusions indicated earlier. Some of the more specific and interesting perceptions which occur in his analysis are:

1. More than any other note, *Ni* displays flexibility of intonation (p. 97).
2. The tones *Ma* and *Pa* ... are significantly more stable (p.100).
3. Laboratory readings show that *Ga-s* in Behag and Yaman are identical (p. 103).
4. *Ga (komal)* has higher averages in *raga-s* where more oscillation is present (p. 103).
5. The fourteen examples of the *Ga (komal)* in Darbari not only vary greatly in average intonation, but also in the width of the oscillation (p. 109).
6. Generally, there is an observable sharpening of the octave or octave-stretching (p. 104).

These and similar perceptions make Levy's attempt appear extremely concrete and that is a positive gain. Rather than coming down from theoretical heights to performance, he prefers the hard way up from individual examples to plausible theoretical conclusions. However, this is precisely the reason that (in spite of the escape paragraphs on p. 142-143 where he shows awareness of

the shortcomings of his empirical approach) prompts one to criticise him on three counts. Firstly, his analysis is based on too thin a sampler; secondly, he fails to differentiate the model from the modelled manifestations of Indian music, and thirdly, the complexity of the performed *raga*-repertoire seems to have been ignored in his vision.

The matter of an inadequate sampler is a ticklish one. It is not a question of having mere sufficiency of number—what is significant is whether the sampler possesses a representative character. A whole chain is to be kept in view while analysing Indian music. *Raga*-performer-*Guru-Gharana* are the minimum levels to be brought into the picture. (These are, of course, capable of being split further.) For example, a *raga* is not necessarily very similar in every composition. Equally serious is the matter that Levy's sampler of the theoretical positions is too inadequately representative. No works in the regional languages are considered. Brihaspati, Omkarnath Thakur, Kapileshwari, Patwardhan are some of the authors worth noting in this respect. These and others had a close connection with the performing tradition and hence a discussion of their positions would have been specially relevant. Finally, on what basis does Levy conclude that the entire theorization about Indian music in India is not only verbalized but also written down? Is he not aware (with his welcome ethnomusicological leanings) that the 'truer' theorization in India is available in teaching—learning situations? Many of the perceptions in his study, therefore, only confirm what *talim* is all about.

Secondly, Levy fails to realize that the mainstream of Indian music is vocal and that, in vocal music, the relevant representative data is to be found with practitioners who are known for their wide repertoire. Instrumental music has only recently come of age and is more or less content with emulating what vocal music has been doing. Thus, unless a researcher takes a well-selected sample of vocal music he is bound to be puzzled by certain occurrences. For example, Bundu Khan had ample use for a low-type oscillation in Darbari (p. 117) because he *knew* vocal music in depth. A wider sample of compositions in Darbari would have given Levy a proper perspective in this respect. Again, Levy's restricted sampler does not reflect the variety of vocal forms. Surely, intonation in *Tarana* and *Dhrupad* cannot be similar. This is, in fact, the reason why the traditional dictum has been "to sing according to the composition i.e. *Chiz*." The 'imprecision' in intonation would, in such cases, be a result of deliberate deviation in order to establish the individuality of the composition within a larger framework.

Thirdly, the extremely wide spectrum of possibilities of intonation must be studied in the context of the totality of the *raga*-corpus in circulation. The intonation of the member-notes of a *raga* is a dynamic process dependent on the nature of *raga*-s prominently in circulation. For example, the intonation as well as the tonal sequences in Bhairav-Bahar underwent changes when Ahir-Bhairav came into prominence—chiefly because both the *raga*-s had to be kept distinct (if their potentialities were to be realised in full). Similarly, the *mishra raga*-s often contain seeds of changeable intonation depending on the artist's inclination to emphasize one or the other component *raga*. Thus, a Basant ki Bahar or Hindol ki Bahar would mean one type of intonation in *sthai* and a different one in *antara*. This is flexibility and not imprecision and it also speaks of a theorization, though not the one 'discovered' in written documents!

In the final analysis, Levy impresses more in method than in substance, in rigour rather than in comprehensiveness. One hopes for a continuation of laboratory-based methodical analysis, but with a definite feeling that this is possible only *after* a closer acquaintance with Indian musical reality is achieved. A point-based precision need not by itself be regarded as more valuable than a range-based definiteness. Similarly, the validity of a predominantly oral tradition cannot justifiably be sought in its skeletal written presentation. And lastly, theoretical positions are rarely averred in induced recordings. They are more often stated in non-verbal processes associated with music.

—ASHOK D. RANADE

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VAIDIK PARAMPARA ME SAMAGANA. Translated by Madanlal Vyas from the Bengali original by Rajyeshwar Mitra. Published by Anand Prakashan Samsthan, Varanasi, 1982, Rs. 50.00 (*In Hindi*).

According to the Indian tradition, *sama*, the Vedic chant, is the fountainhead of all music. All subsequent music emerged from it. How much of *sama* was passed on to later music, and in what form, remains a question for the historian of music, but with *sama*, unquestionably, the history of Indian music begins. Yet, *sama* has not been accorded the degree and depth of interest it deserves. Hence, this study devoted entirely to *sama* is welcome, especially because it is in Hindi. An increasing number of students of the theory and history of music study the subject in that language. The Hindi translation is lucid, except for the occasional phrase which remains rooted in the Bengali idiom. For instance, on page 12, two Bengali words, "ei" and "oi" are retained without their Hindi equivalents, "yah" and "wah" ("this" and "that") being given. One cannot understand the reason for this curious lapse.

Welcome though Mitra's study is, it belongs to that class of books, not uncommon in India, which are written as if in an intellectual vacuum. Mitra writes as if no study of the subject has been made by a modern scholar before him. Modern literature concerned with a study of *sama* or Vedic music is not as encompassing or satisfactory as one would wish it to be, yet a substantial body of literature does exist and it is reasonable to expect that a new study of the subject would show an awareness of this literature and that it would be written in the perspective of this existing literature, treating what exists as a repository that needs to be further enriched or a background for a fresh approach. Though Mitra claims that he is making a critical, "scientific" study, while reading him, one has the curious impression of somehow having come across the first book on the subject after the great medieval Vedic commentator, Sayana. Mitra does not refer to any literature except the ancient. A critical work, we believe, should take into view other critical works. Mitra, apparently, does not think so.

This perhaps is one reason why the book appears to be intellectually rather naive, or, one might say, simplistic. Theories and views are presented without due argument or evidence. There is hardly any *purvapakshe*; no actual or possible objection is properly debated. His theses sound more like pronouncements than reasoned proposals which, in a region of uncertainty like ancient Vedic music, is certainly not the cautious, interpretative approach expected of a critical study. Just one example, from an aspect basic to an understanding of the musical structure of *sama*, will illustrate my point.

Current *sama* singing, Mitra declares, cannot give us a clue to ancient *sama*, for *sama* has become totally transformed (even distorted) over the ages. Neither, he adds, can we learn anything from the present living tradition of *sama* singers, thus entirely ignoring a vital source of study. Even in ancient times, he rightly tells us, *sama* singing had many schools; hence a multiplicity of forms and styles. But, he asserts—without, characteristically, trying to demonstrate the point—that there was still a common manner of singing *sama*, which can be discovered from relevant ancient texts. The scale used in singing *sama*, he says, was the modern major scale, the *shuddha* scale of current Hindustani music, the Bilaval *thaat*. Apparently, all songs of the large *sama* corpus were, according to him, sung to this one scale, for he speaks of no other. That the scale was Bilaval, he says, can be deduced from the *Naradi Shiksha*, an ancient text on *sama*, the date of which is uncertain, as is the authenticity of many of its passages, crucial historical questions which Mitra, however, does not discuss.

The *Naradi Shiksha*, Mitra says, seems to indicate Bilaval as the *samic* scale. Yet, despite the hesitation expressed in the “seems to”, he draws this fundamental conclusion, on which he bases all his subsequent analyses and detailed charting of *samic* musical structures, without demonstrating it through proper textual interpretation. He does not even pause to refer his reader to the passage in the *Shiksha* from which he deduces this key conclusion. However, since he makes his deduction from what the *Shiksha* has to say concerning the relation of *shruti* to *svara*, it is not difficult to locate the passage he must have in mind. In *prapathaka* 1, *kandika* 7, of the *Shiksha* there are a few verses—especially 9-14—which speak of the matter. But what the text here says regarding *shruti* and its relation to *svara* is neither very clear nor unambiguous. The term *shruti* here seems to refer not to tonal measure—as Mitra unquestioningly assumes—but to the different expressions with which the same tone may be rendered in singing. Narada speaks of five kinds of *shruti*-s: *dipta*, *ayata*, *karuna*, *mrudu* and *madhya* (verse 9).<sup>\*</sup> In the next verse, he relates different notes to these different *shruti*-s: In five of the seven notes of the octave, the *shruti*, Narada says, should be *dipta*; in the first note it should be *mrudu* and, in the last, *karuna*. In verse 10, the second note is connected to three more *shruti*-s, *mrudu*, *madhya* and *ayata*. The next verse says: “The state of being *ayata* belongs to a low (note); the state of being *mrudu* to its opposite; the state of being *madhya* belongs to the note itself (? *sve svare* — the meaning is not clear). Application should be made with this in mind.” The next three verses of the passage are obscure but nowhere is there a suggestion that *shruti* means a microtone and that the number of *shruti*-s in a *svara* indicate its tonal measure. In fact, the term *shruti* seems to have been used in the *Shiksha* in a qualitative, rather than in the quantitative sense of microtonal measure as in Bharata and Dattila. Commenting on verses 12-14 of *prapathaka* 1, *kandika* 7 of

the *Shiksha*, verses which to us seem obscure, Bhatta Shobhakara implies an aesthetic meaning of the five *shruti*-s, certainly not a microtonal one. Clarifying the meaning of verse 12, he says: “The second note will have the *ayata shruti* if it is followed by the third note coming below it; if, contrarily, the fourth note follows it, it will have the *mrudu shruti*”:

नीचे तृतीये स्वर परतः स्थिते द्वितीय स्वर स्थायता श्रुतिः विपर्यये चतुर्थ स्वर परे भूने षड्भूता ...

Commenting on the following two verses, he speaks of different *shruti*-s to be used for different vowels sung at different positions in the *sama* structure. All this seems to show that the term *shruti* in the *Naradi Shiksha*, conveys different expressive ways of intoning *svara*-s rather than their tonal quantity. The word *shruti* occurs for the first time in the *Shiksha* in *prapathaka* 1, *kandika* 6, verses 15-18, where its “aesthetic” meaning is even more obvious.

What I have said above may be debated and a case made out for Mitra’s interpretation (though I cannot see how). But this is just the point. Mitra has not thought it necessary to make out a case, to analyse and interpret a passage, to argue for an interpretation before coming to a crucial conclusion. Such an attitude of arbitrariness marks his entire venture. Yet, where matters of information alone are concerned and not of interpretation (which, unfortunately, in a study of ancient musical structures, is bound to pervade the whole discussion), the book certainly is useful. It is well-produced, tastefully bound and reasonably priced. It does not have an index or, expectedly, a bibliography.

As Mitra, regrettably, does not give his readers any idea regarding modern studies pertaining to *sama*, I would like to append here a short list of books and papers written on the subject over the last few decades. The list does not claim to be comprehensive. It is a very cursory, off-hand attempt to demonstrate to the reader that modern *samic* studies have a fairly long and established tradition, with studies in English, French, German as well as Sanskrit and Hindi, not to speak of Bengali in which Mitra has written.

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<sup>\*</sup> All references to the *Naradi Shiksha* are to the edition published by Shri Pitambarapitha Samskrita Parishad, Dattiya (Madhya Pradesh), 1964. It incorporates the commentary of Bhatta Shobhakara.

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#### Books:

- Die indische Musik der vedischen und der klassischen Zeit*, by E. Felber: Wien, 1912.  
*The Vedic Chant Studied in its Textual and Melodic Form*, by J. M. van der Hoogt: Wageningen, 1929.  
*Les écoles védiques et la formation du Vêda*, by L. Renou: Paris, 1947.  
*Studies on the Samaveda*, 1 : by B. Faddegon, Amsterdam, 1951.  
*Nambudiri Veda Recitation*, by J. F. Staal, The Hague, 1961.  
*Bharatiya Sangita ka Itihasa*, by Sharatchandra Shridhara Paranjape, Varanasi, 1969.

*Bharatiya Sangiter Itihasa*, Vol. II (in Bengali) by Svami Prajnanananda, Calcutta, 1961 (first edition, 1959).

*Raga O Rupa*, Vol. 1 (in Bengali) by Svami Prajnanananda, Calcutta, (second enlarged edition) 1957.

The editor's Sanskrit introduction to *Kauthumashakhayah Uhaganam Uhyaganam*, ed. A. M. Ramanath Dikshit, Varanasi, 1967.

*Articles and Papers:*

"Die Notationen der vedischen Liederbücher" by R. Simon: *WZKM*, 27, (1913), 345-6.

"Récitations du Vêda" by L. Renou in *Sanskrit et Culture*, Paris, 1947.

"The Music of the *Samaveda* Chants" by T. K. Aiyar: *Journal of The Music Academy* (Madras), 20 (1949), 144-51.

"Some Problems regarding *Samagana* that Await Investigation" by V. M. Apte: *Bulletin of The Deccan College Research Institute*, 4 (1942-43), 280-95.

"The Mode of Singing *Samagana*" by Bhatta Dravida: *The Poona Orientalist*, 4, (1939), 1-21.

—MUKUND LATH

WOODCUT PRINTS OF NINETEENTH CENTURY CALCUTTA. Texts by Nikhil Sarkar, Purnendu Pattrea, Pranabranjan Ray and B. N. Mukherjee. Edited and designed by Ashit Paul. Published by Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1983, Rs. 200.00 (*In English*).

At first sight the book might appear to belong to the coffee-table variety. It is profusely illustrated, the types are well-chosen, and it has a handsome jacket. The publication is priced at Rs. 200/-, which though beyond the common reach, is not excessive considering the production costs of a book of this kind.

On further acquaintance, the book turns out to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject. There's the history of Calcutta, the history of printing in India, the ancient world history of woodblock printing. There are four in-depth studies which comprise the text of this book: (1) Calcutta Woodcuts: Aspects of a Popular Art by Nikhil Sarkar (2) The Continuity of the Battala Tradition: An Aesthetic Revaluation by Purnendu Pattrea (3) Printmaking by Woodblock up to 1901: A Social and Technological History by Pranabranjan Ray (4) Pictures from Woodcut Blocks: An Iconological Analysis by B. N. Mukherjee. There is a Glossary and Notes and an Index of Illustrations and Artists reproduced. It would be difficult to imagine a more thorough treatment of this subject. Indeed for the average person, who might be interested in a general sort of way (as he sips his coffee), this would be heavy weather indeed.

However, for the more serious-minded, the essays do raise some interesting questions. In the Preface, Ashit Paul says "The art of the nineteenth century woodcut is dead . . . it was left to the four scholars and artists who have contributed

to this volume to rediscover and reevaluate this lost art to readers and viewers in our times."

The first question which arises is how much of what was done is art at all. Going through the many illustrations in this thoroughly documented book, I can pick out only a few which would qualify as art and transcend the immediate purpose for which they were done. They were executed either as posters or book illustrations and, in course of time, even as independent pictures. They drew heavily on the Kalighat *pat*-s which were liberated from ritual and the written or spoken word. Notwithstanding the conventional subject-matter of Hindu gods and depictions from the epics, the intentions were completely secular and commercial. It is not surprising that woodcuts could not survive in the competition against lithography and more advanced printing technology. The woodcuts "died" because they rarely transcended the craft. Transcendence here would have meant a development of the pictorial concepts—a feeling not so much for the ostensible message but a concern for what comprises pictorial space and its specific ingredients in the case of woodcuts. Woodcutting skills, however refined, are not a substitute for a vision of woodcuts as ART.

This is what Shiko Munakata, the modern Japanese master, had to say—"I advise the layman to spread India ink on an uncarved board, lay paper on top of it, and print it. He will get a black print, but the result is not the blackness of ink, it is the blackness of prints. Now the object is to give this print greater life and greater power by carving its surface. Whatever I carve I compare it with an uncarved print and ask myself "Which has more beauty, more strength, more depth, more magnitude, more movement, and more tranquility? If there is anything here that is inferior to an uncarved block, then I have not created my print I have lost to the board." How very different were Munakata's concerns is very evident and it would be impudent for me to elaborate.

To my mind, the movable types and the ornamental Bengali characters engraved on wood are far more successful and satisfying and I suspect the reason for this lies in a concern for more fundamental values. The engraver was not saddled with the problem of transposing narrative depiction from another medium. He didn't have to "fill in" large areas by mechanical cross-hatching. He was confronted with the straightforward but essential problem of balancing black and white rhythms.

Whilst on the subject of "filling in," I am tempted to comment on a remark made by Purnendu Pattrea in his most informative and lucid essay. He speaks of the extraordinary skill of Nriyatal Dutta "in filling in empty spaces" and a little further he mentions this again as proof "that the origins of modernistic art are not really modern." Good art, old or new, never conceives of space as empty or, by implication, a kind of remainder after the establishment of the main form or forms. All forms, negative and positive, are supportively related—creating a sense of proportion. There is never any question of first determining the space and form of the subject matter and then dealing with the rest—the entirety has to be comprehended. Unfortunately, this does not always happen and certainly many of the illustrations, particularly of the later period, show no concern with proportion or forms which are linked inextricably.



Certainly, one can learn a great deal even if it means knowing what to avoid. As Bhupen Khakkar said recently to me, but in quite a different context, "You can only learn from bad art, never from good."

—KRISHEN KHANNA

ORIENTAL MUSIC IN EUROPEAN NOTATION by A.M.C. Mudaliyar. Edited by Gowri Kuppaswamy and M. Hari Haran. Published by Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1982, Rs. 275.00 (*Text in English*).

"The diamonds of Golconda derive fresh brilliancy and lustre when cut and set in accordance with the laws of European workmanship; . . . in short, almost everything appears to better advantage in European garb; in like manner, the musical gems and flowers of India will be better appreciated and admired in European jewel-cases and European flower vases . . ."

These lines might exude a strong whiff of Victoriana for the reader; but there is certainly more to the book, *Oriental Music in European Notation* by A.M.C. Mudaliyar, than the ambience of Victoriana. The forty-six pages which comprise the Introduction in this large-sized book are quite instructive. They reveal a keen mind capable of foresight. The book was initially published in 1893. It has been edited and brought out in a new format by Gowri Kuppaswamy and M. Hari Haran.

The comparative terminology used by the author sounds very interesting today. One can see quite clearly the problems faced by a lover of Indian traditional music who had an almost uncontrollable urge to communicate with connoisseurs of European music. Chinnaswamy Mudaliyar is quite aware, for instance, of the difference in the "just intonation" practised by Indian and European musicians, but he tries to find a solution by saying: "The mathematical ratios of the Indian Gamut likewise vary in the North and South of India, but this extremely complicated question may be left open for the present, because for all practical purposes the system of equal temperament which coincides almost exactly with the adjustment of frets on the VINA is found to meet all existing requirements more or less satisfactorily." This is where the urge to communicate asserts itself! Elsewhere, he laments the withdrawal of the support formerly offered to music by Indian rulers. He also states that while the British showed interest in the renaissance "of indigenous literature, arts, and sciences," they expressed little concern for the cause of music. He is also conscious of the fact that his compilation would start a debate amongst scholars but claims that his endeavours were actuated by one motive, namely "to exhume the hidden treasures of Eastern Music and lay them before the eyes of the whole world." A.M.C. Mudaliyar must have felt that the best way to do this was by adapting the staff notation system. We would do him an injustice if we did not see his efforts in relation to the times in which he lived. The only way to preserve the music must have been to learn/teach it and treat it as a sacred inheritance. The only way one could hope to transport it from one place to another was by physically transporting the artiste (and, of course, hoping that the goods were delivered unbroken)!

Apparently, the melodies that were published earlier were tried out by a few western musicians on their own and were found wanting in one respect—Harmony. A.M.C. Mudaliyar, undaunted by this complaint, proceeds to find a solution to the problem, writes harmony for a couple of songs, and a piece of advice follows: "It would be idle for the compiler to waste time or space over them (harmonies) especially as he is convinced that European Harmony mars all the beauty and intrinsic grace of Oriental Melody."

The editors have altered the original script of the songs, which was Telugu, to Devanagari and Roman. This change has made it possible for Indian readers to have an access to the songs of Tyagaraja, Muttuswami Dikshitar and Pallavi Sheshayyengar, an admirable contribution in itself. The staff notation printing, a relatively arduous task, has been accomplished satisfactorily. The photographs of North Indian musical instruments are incongruous and could have been replaced by photographs of the Carnatic Sangeeta instruments.

Although the contents of the book might be considered debatable in a few places, the book is of value both for practising musicians of the European and other traditions. Those interested in the historical documents of our musical heritage will find a wealth of material here. To South Indian musicians, it offers a viewpoint of the Victorian age from whence to compare and overview the two traditions of European and Carnatic music.

—BHASKAR CHANDAVARKAR

DHVANYALOKA of Anandavardhana. Critically edited with Introduction, Translation and Notes by Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy. Published by Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, Second Edition (1982), Rs. 75.00 (cloth), Rs. 50.00 (paper) (*In English and Sanskrit*).

In the long history of Sanskrit Poetics, *Dhvanyaloka* (9th century A. D.) truly enjoys a key position. Its author, Anandavardhana, has not only made a unique contribution to the sum-total of ideas in Poetics, but has changed the subsequent course of those ideas. Himself a poet of no mean order, Anandavardhana had a very perceptive, almost a seismographic mind for enjoying and appraising poetry. No author on Poetics, who followed Anandavardhana, could ignore his singular contribution, may be for hostile criticism or for acquiescent following. Poetics which till then hovered around stray, enumerated features, suddenly found, as it were, its soul, namely *Dhvani* (the suggested sense). Anandavardhana's findings encompassed all the work that had preceded him and opened new vistas for a fresh look at poetry and poetics. He was also the first writer on Poetics to attempt an enquiry into semantics.

In spite of the enviable place of *Dhvanyaloka* in the field of Indian Poetics, we do not have even now a definitive edition of *Dhvanyaloka*. Credit, therefore, must go to Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy, who has been engaged in this undertaking over a period of three decades, for paving the way to such a definitive edition.

The present edition is the fruit of his untiring efforts and his continuous quest for new manuscripts all over India.

Even so, Dr. Krishnamoorthy could avail himself (for his editing work) of only the limited number of manuscripts that he could obtain from various manuscript libraries. They are valuable enough and the importance and value of his present work consists in the various readings which he has collated and included in the footnotes. A sample comparison (pp. XIV to XVI) of the hitherto available readings with Krishnamoorthy's adopted manuscript and other material at once reveals his editing acumen and critical assessment.

Scores of manuscripts, in various scripts, so far unearthed, of both *Dhvanyaloka* and *Lochana* (Abhinavagupta's well-known commentary) and also of other commentaries, are stored all over India and abroad in manuscript libraries. The principal manuscripts which the present editor could make use of are: ten from the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune; one from Moodabidre (Karnatak); and one from Kakinada (Andhra). The editor's intention in presenting all the printed and manuscript material, has been to constitute an accurate and dependable text of *Dhvanyaloka*. Indeed, the editor has been successful in reclaiming many improved readings at many places. This is a distinct gain. One now looks forward to a truly definitive edition of the *Dhvanyaloka* with *Lochana* and other important commentaries.

Dr. Krishnamoorthy has also provided a good English translation which is printed facing the Sanskrit text of *Dhvanyaloka*. Besides, there are Notes, discussing various points arising out of the text, its meaning and the content. The Notes sometimes appear a little too meagre for the needs of the general reader. Among the various Indices at the end of the book, is a Glossary of technical terms and their English equivalents. This will be especially useful, not merely to readers of this book, but also to the reader of any work on Sanskrit Poetics because almost the same terminology is employed in subsequent works on Poetics. If one has some differences regarding the equivalents, it is only natural and detracts in no way from the value of the work.

—ARVIND MANGRULKER

**PERFORMATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES.** From the Avant Garde to *Ramlila* by Richard Schechner. Published by Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1983, Rs. 70.00 (In English).

Richard Schechner is a theatre man, the founder-director of the Performance Group in New York. His passion is the performance theory, a discipline which draws heavily upon philosophical or cultural anthropology. It also entails much actual field experience in ritual practice, crowd behaviour as well as the surviving theatre-cum-dance forms around the globe. It is for this reason that the extraordinary *Ramlila* of Ramnagar absorbs the author. After all, in *Ramlila*, the

participation of the spectator in the performance is whole-souled, with no hard-and-fast line whatsoever between actor and spectator or dream and reality. Here perhaps is the veritable root of the half-in, half-out-of life theatre of Brecht or Grotowski.

As it happens, Schechner's book-making is exactly in line with his dramatic methods. His narrative style is Brechtian, a kind of *Ramlila* or *Mela* of words. He can be as impressionistically chatty as in his introduction, or as cool as a computer scientist breaking down into black-board diagrams the teeming movement of the life observed.

In chapters such as 'Restoration of Behaviour' or 'The Crash of Performative Circumstances: A Modernist Discourse on Postmodernism', you have either an exalted Platonist reasoning, or else an all-out poetic meditation on the fate of the human spirit in a violent century. But, even at such moments, Schechner cannot help taking you behind the scenes, that is in the backyard of his own mind. Clearly, he seems to shun the pundit's secretiveness or solemnity. This lack of water-tight stylistic compartments may mean naivete or excessive frankness; even so, the mode of writing does not appear outlandish and is rather charming. His is not merely put-on informality. The manner results from the writer's personality trait, of experiencing life at the pitch of near divine madness, a fact which, in turn, makes even the most humdrum detail appear as a vital piece in his theatrical jigsaw. And indeed, all is grist to his mill. The passion is nothing less than for the theatre of life, and the passion is messianic. A cool theatre craftsman, Schechner is also imbued with the holy adventure of amassing the rich ritualistic, the unconscious or unselfconscious theatrical forms of the earth, for a very good cause: he lets their spirits usher in a renaissance in the modern theatre, but only a theatre which itself results in the creation of a new *communitas*, theatre here being both an end and a means. And this is no uninformed, mindless enthusiasm for the impossible. Surely, it is a theatrical radicalism which is sparked off by the dithyrambic urgencies and alarms of the current world stage on a sensitive being. Schechner's moral imagination, then, has been fired with the will to recharge life with redemptive theatrical action. Theatre being a very life-like, body-speech-mime and movement art, must draw people—physically as well as emotionally—into the communion of human dialogue.

Schechner's are fascinating strategies, now empirical, fact-adducing, now à la investigative reporting, now a precise photographic eye dwelling on the minutest bit of evidence. And why? Because all these help him outline the evolution of ritual into theatre. All his separate particularizations are, at the same time, well balanced against the rarefied, yet carefully outlined, overall conceptualisation. Such a multi-media approach keeps us on our toes. Of course, Schechner's progress through whole chunks of alien cultures is all too bold. But this is because, finally, nothing is alien to his spirit. His artist's empathies and human sympathies are writ large; and these oblige the reader to be sharply aware of what it is to be.

—KESHAV MALIK

## Record Reviews

USTAD ALI AKBAR KHAN and PANDIT RAVI SHANKAR with USTAD ALLA RAKHA (Tabla) at San Francisco. Side One: *Raga* Khamaj. Side Two: *Raga* Durga. EMI ECSD 41516 (Stereo).

USTAD AMJAD ALI KHAN: *Guldasta-e-Raga*. Side One: Shiva Ranjini, Hamsadhvani, Zila Kafi. Side Two: Anandi, Darbari Kanhara, Bhatiyali. Side Three: Shiva Kalyan, Lalita Dhvani, Mishra Khamaj. Side Four: Saraswati, Bihag, Bhairavi. EMI Double LP Set S/EMGE 22001-2 (Stereo).

So much depends on the receptivity of the listener! I could not have selected a more appropriate and relaxed moment than a Sunday morning to listen to the LP of Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Ali Akbar Khan. The listening session was indeed a pleasure!

As the recording is from a live concert, one imagines that Durga and Khamaj must be items amongst several others. Otherwise, one cannot explain how Khamaj, which is played in a relatively lighter vein, is on Side One; normally a lighter piece follows a *pucca raga*. But this apart, the music bears the individual stamp of the artistes. The *sarod*, majestic and relaxed, with a touch and tone which are truly Ali Akbar Khan's. The *sitar*—sweet, (with a touch of devotion intermixed), playful and, again, with the unique Ravi Shankar touch. The *tabla* accompaniment is precise, both adequate and appropriate, and informed by the uncanny understanding, which only Alla Rakha Khan can contribute.

Durga has a very beautiful and lucid beginning and the music warms up as the *raga* is gradually unfolded with a natural and systematic approach. The easy-to-comprehend and pure Durga phrases, which the artistes play with experienced awareness—now repeating, now adding, now rounding off—are all there. Even the layman can enjoy and partake in the musical experience alongside an initiated listener.

Khamaj, played in a lighter vein, projects the ingenuity of the duo and Alla Rakha Khan's restrained accompaniment only adds to the excellence of the piece. Some may feel that the artistes, whilst creating and wandering through different phrases, have perhaps strayed into too many unconnected areas. Particularly so, because it is often maintained that the hues and colours of even a lighter variety should have an undercurrent and a common bond which result in a homogeneous and balanced presentation.

A very impressive-looking album contains two records of Amjad Ali Khan in which he has played short pieces depicting various moods conveyed through different *raga*-s. He describes these pieces as a bouquet—*Guldasta*. It is certainly not a garland linking different varieties of flowers but truly a bouquet made up of different kinds of flowers with their characteristic hues and fragrances. It is justly said that every flower has an individuality and flavour of its own and this is so for the different pieces played by Amjad Ali Khan.

In the sleeve-notes, the artiste states that conventional developments have become all too mechanical; hence he has presented short compositions. One can argue that these two types of presentations or unfoldings do not necessarily contradict each other. In fact, they could complement each other, especially when one envisages a concert as a whole entity, comprising of different items. Full-length pieces, developed conventionally, are usually followed by short pieces of a light classical variety or with short, faster tempo *gat*-s. It is difficult, however, to agree with the artiste's contention that, without such experiments, our heritage would "stagnate".

After having said this, one has to admit that the pieces presented are indeed jewels which radiate many shades of sheer beauty, exuding melodic content of great excellence and youthful execution. The *sarod*, sweet and precise in its tone, meanders through many moods aptly described by the artiste himself in the album.

The clarity of the notes and the controlled manipulation of *laya* and *tala*, infused with creative innovations, create an extremely enjoyable musical experience. Amjad Ali Khan is truly an enviable product of traditional *talim* superimposed with modern and imaginative techniques.

—ARVIND PARIKH

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MERAJ-E-GHAZAL: ASHA BHOSLE Presented by GHULAM ALI  
EMI Double LP Set ECSD 2926/27 (Stereo)

JALWA-E-GHAZAL: SALMA AGHA  
MUSIC INDIA 2393 884 (Stereo)

DILRUBA : PENAAZ MASANI  
MUSIC INDIA 2393 912

FARMAISH: A live performance by ANUP JALOTA  
MUSIC INDIA Double LP Set 2675 517 (Stereo)

LEHREN: TALAT AZIZ  
MUSIC INDIA 2393 902 (Stereo)

KITNE HI RANG (Ghazals): CHANDAN DASS  
MUSIC INDIA 2393 910 (Stereo)

MAN HARI BOL (Bhajans): SURESH WADKAR  
EMI ECSD 2924 (Stereo)

ENCHANTING HOUR WITH MOHAMMED RAFI (Singing for Dilip Kumar)  
EMI G/ECLP 5852 (Regular)

ANAND GHAN—LATA. Marathi Film Songs composed and sung by Lata Mangeshkar.  
EMI ECLP 7410.

KATHA. (Music: Rajkamal; Lyrics: Indu Jain)  
EMI 45NLP 1200.

MANDI. (Music: Vanraj Bhatia).  
MUSIC INDIA 2392 422 (Stereo)

THE GENIUS OF SHOBHA GURTU: Thumri. Kajri. Hori. Dadra.  
MUSIC INDIA 2393 899 (Stereo).

MEMORIES: G. S. SACHDEV (Flute). Side One: Raga Alhaiya Bilawal. Side Two:  
Raga Alhaiya Bilawal; Raga Bhimpalasi.  
MUSIC INDIA 2393 905 (Stereo)

In point of sheer number and variety, this batch of recent releases would appear to cater to all tastes. I propose to deal with the *ghazal* fare first. As many as eight records, including two double albums, cover *ghazal* music—I mean the contemporary variety, which is the in-thing, especially among today's elite. And it is perhaps just as well that the purveyors of disc music should play safe, relying on its popularity and also cash in on established reputations.

Asha Bhosle and Ghulam Ali have done little to substantiate the claim made in the sleeve-notes that this album is the "ultimate in *ghazal*-s". On the contrary, it would rather seem to signify the end of the great era of the traditional *ghazal*, which always embodied a rare fusion of poetic feeling and musical sensitivity. Of the twelve numbers, four are duets by Asha and Ghulam, while the rest are all in Asha's voice. In many cases, one feels that the tunes contribute little towards portraying the lyrical content of the chosen couplets. The saving grace, if it could be called one, comes from Asha Bhosle through three of her numbers *Roodad-E-Mohabbat*, *Raat Jo Tune* and *Phir Sawan Rut*.

One can hardly feel particularly enthused about Salma Agha's eight *ghazal*-s. She brings with the music her glamour as a singing film star. The renditions, some of them well-tuned, sound mechanical and lack warmth of feeling. Penaaz Masani's six lyrics also fall in the same category, though one must concede that she has a very sensitive voice.

Anup Jalota, Talat Aziz and Chandan Dass are all endowed with well-cultivated voices. They have a good sense of diction and delivery and a feeling for the value of words. Theirs can well be summed up as the "new wave" *ghazal* music which is not totally divorced from tradition but attempts to seek new directions without succumbing to filmi temptations. I am inclined to include Suresh Wadkar in this group, though the fare he offers here is devotional. Suresh Wadkar is now emerging as a perceptive exponent of popular music and a good playback singer. The *bhajan*-s, by and large, make for delightful listening. But the tunes do not reveal much variety and often remind us of similar compositions by Shyam Sagar popularised by singers like Suman Kalyanpur.

Now, to come to film music, pride of place must go to Mohammed Rafi and Lata Mangeshkar. The songs heard here are all reproductions of popular hits of yesteryear. Rafi's songs, sung for Dilip Kumar, are in Hindi. But Lata is featured in this disc not only as a singer but also as a music composer (assuming the name 'Anand Ghan') of songs in several Marathi films. Besides Lata herself, we hear the voices of Asha, Usha, Hridaynath and Hemant Kumar in this disc. Although all these songs belong to bygone years, they retain a nostalgic charm. To old-time connoisseurs of Hindi and Marathi film music, in particular, these discs will be a cherished acquisition.

The songs from *Katha* are in keeping with its spirit of comedy. The music of *Mandi* can well be described as trend-setting. It is to the credit of Vanraj Bhatia (a composer trained in western music) that the vision and initiative of his experimentations have helped to widen the horizons of Indian classical music. In a sense, his music for *Mandi* can be said to be an extension of the quest which he began a few years ago with *Bhoomika*. Incidentally, the mention of the concluding piece on Side One as "*Alap in raga Todi*" is a little misleading, in that what is actually sung (by Asha Bhosle) is a skilful combination of Lalit and Todi. Even the composition that follows the *alap* has the opening words from a celebrated *khayal* in *raga* Lalit.

In this mixed fare for review, it is the exponents of traditional music, Shobha Gurtu and G. S. Sachdev, who stand out prominently on account of their remarkable talent. Shobha Gurtu is one of our finest interpreters of light classical music and in the illustrious lineage of Begum Akhtar, Siddheswari Devi and Rasoolanbai. Endowed with a voice that is rich in timbre and tone, she imparts depth of feeling to whatever she sings. Her gift for eloquent phrasing and delicate accent is unique. All these qualities are spontaneously expressed in the music of the disc under review. Whatever the theme, it is suffused with passion and expressed meaningfully.

Flutist G. S. Sachdev, who, it appears, has settled in the States, is not so familiar to audiences here; nor does the sleeve-note give any details of his musical lineage. Even so, his presentations in Alhaiya Bilawal in *vilambit* and *drut*, followed by a medium tempo Bhimpalasi, speak of thorough grooming in woodwind music. The depictions, marked by a sure sense of form and design, sound authentic in content, treatment and approach and Shyam Kane lends adroit *tabla* support.

—MOHAN NADKARNI



# MUTTUSWAMI DIKSHITAR

by

Dr. V. Raghavan

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## Back Cover:

The marriage of Krishna and Rukmini, featuring a boy and girl of the village (who are in no way connected with the dance-drama), is conducted symbolically on the morning after the presentation of the play *Rukmini Kalyanam*.

- ↓ Hiranyakashipu holding court, mainly to expatiate on his fanatical desire to destroy his son Prahlada, whom he considers a threat to his own claim of being mightier than God.

(Cover Design: Ratnakar Sohoni)

